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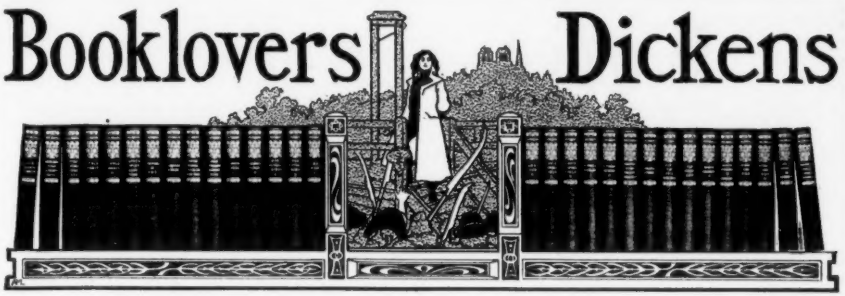
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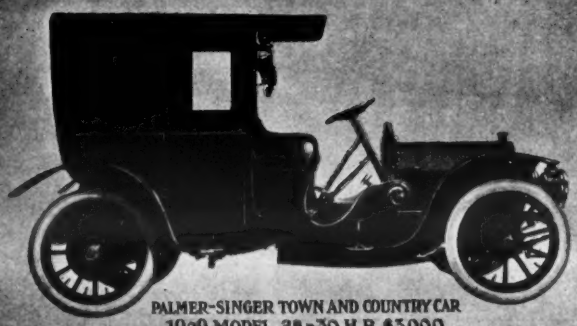
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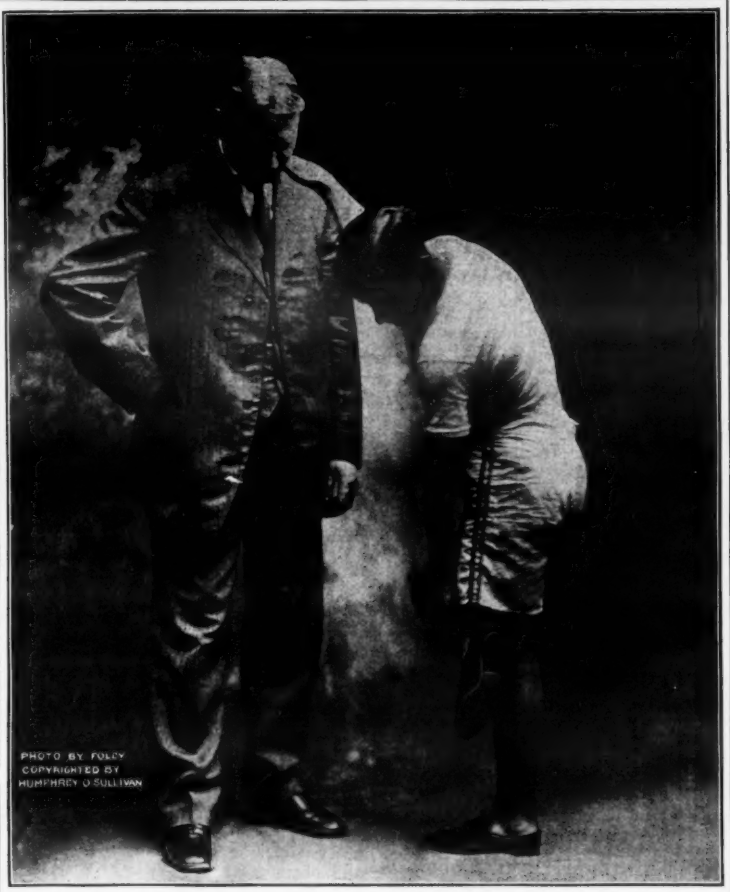
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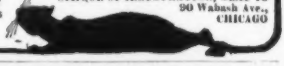
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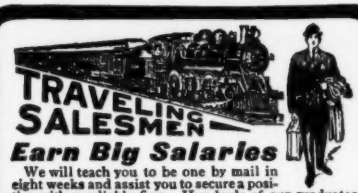
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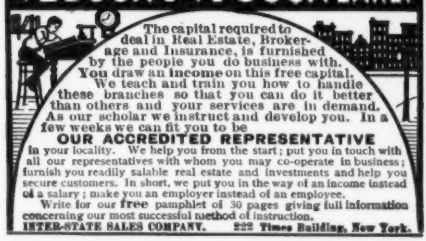
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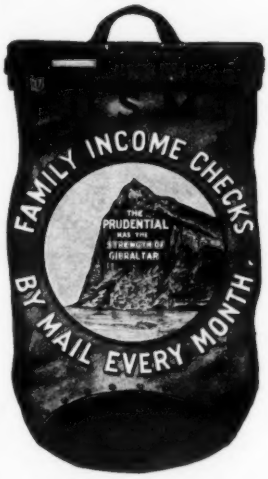
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VOL. XXII — CONTENTS — No. 4

FOR · NOVEMBER · 1908

Cover Design	*Clarence T. Underwood*	
The Thoroughbred. Two-part Story. Part Two	*Edith Macvane*	1
Light o' Love. Poem	*Torrance Benjamin*	37
The Heart at Twenty. Short Story	*William J. Locke*	38
The Priceless Thought. Poem	*John Kendrick Bangs*	42
Cupid and Clam Fritters. Short Story	*Joseph C. Lincoln*	43
On the Latmian Steep. Poem	*Rhoda Hero Dunn*	51
After Velasquez. Short Story	*Austin Adams*	52
The Training of the Groom. Short Story	*George Lee Burton*	63
An Introduction. Short Story	*Camillus Phillips*	72
Around the Bridge Table. Essay	*Arthur Loring Bruce*	83
The Alabama King. Short Story	*Elmore Elliott Peake*	89
Lignite's Lucky Draw. Short Story	*Steel Williams*	98
Distance. Poem	*Theodosia Garrison*	105
The Devil and the Shark. Short Story	*Quentin M. Drake*	106
Friends in Need. Short Story	*Mary Heaton Vorse*	116
Only One Life to Live. Poem	*Jean Watts*	123
The End of the Game. Short Story	*Daniel Steele*	124
The Taxes of Tradition. Short Story	*Jane W. Guthrie*	132
To a Street Organ Melody. Poem	*Martha Gilbert Dickinson Bianchi*	139
In Musicland. Essay	*William Armstrong*	140
Loved Amanda. Short Story	*Owen Oliver*	146
Rosemary and Rue. Poem	*Alice E. Allen*	150
Plays and Players	*A First Nighter*	151
For Book Lovers	*Archibald Lowery Sessions*	157

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"Sweet Sixteen"

This is the title of a beautiful Art Calendar for 1909, issued by Armour & Company. Five famous artists offer in this their best work. Do you want one of these calendars?

Here are the five drawings. The one in the center is by Penrhyn Stanlaws. It serves as part of the cover design. It is done in pastel. You should see it in the color.

The one to the left is by Christy in colored chalk—one of the daintiest effects ever produced by this well-known artist.

The one to the right is by Harrison Fisher in colored crayon—one of his best—typical of his ability.

The other two are by C. Allan Gilbert and Henry Hutt; also in colors — Gilbert's in pastel — Hutt's in wash.

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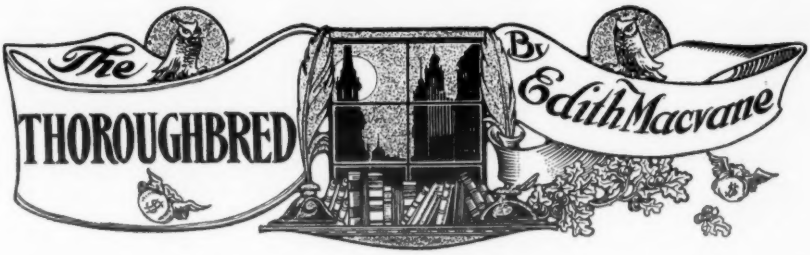
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VOL. XXII. NOVEMBER, 1908. No. 4.



CHAPTER X.

HOW the rest of the day passed, and how the sleepless night, Ellen was hardly conscious. She went to bed, but she could not lie down. It seemed to her there was a spur in her bed. She sat bolt upright till the daylight, with her chin resting on her drawn-up knees. From head to foot she was racked with the sick and ungovernable pangs of the woman who sees the bright eyes of another woman between herself and the man she loves.

Had Ellen loved her husband with the cool and Platonic affection which American wives are celebrated for giving their husbands, she might have felt little as a result of her yesterday's discovery. A reasonable vexation, perhaps, that she had been kept in the dark—a slight mortification, perhaps, that the other woman's services had been deemed more valuable than hers. In point of fact, they were; with no sacrifice of present comfort or of future prospects, Palliser was free. For that freedom, should not his wife be the first to give thanks? Had she felt less for him, she might have done so. But Ellen's feeling for her husband was more than an affection. It was a passion—the one passion that had ever come into her life.

She cared for him, horribly. In her strong and well-balanced nature, here was the weak and undefended spot. Till the day when she had met Jim Palliser, she had scorned the romantic follies of other girls. Since the first hour that they had talked together, his idea had lived in her mind more intensely than the consciousness of her own identity. For her, they were the same. Her husband was more herself than the spirit that lived in her own flesh. So vivid was this conviction, she had hardly realized her own feeling as the human passion of love, with its infinite possibilities of suffering and of self-torture. The shadow of another woman flitting in the background of her husband's life had suddenly enlightened her.

Had Jim Palliser, setting her aside, taken his salvation from the hands of any other woman whatever, the slight would have been painful enough. But in this case, the woman preferred was the woman he had once loved; the woman that he had loved first. Was she also the woman he had loved best? When his need came, it was to her he turned. Was not such faith the highest proof of love?

And that love once granted, what was its nature? The mere kindly remembrance of a bygone passion, or passion's

imperishable self? And if no more than the former, why had the whole transaction been held a secret from her—from her, Jim's wife?

There was the rock on which her faith split. A sentence from Violet's love-letter rang through her excited fancy: "Mum's the word between you and me—isn't it? Isn't it?" Beyond a doubt, mum had been the word indeed. It was still the word. The ancient lovers still had their meetings and their secrets; and she, Jim's wife who loved him, was shut out into the cold.

There was the thought that she carried with her to the breakfast-table. With a resolute imitation of a smile she sat opposite the anxious financier, as he studied the newspaper and prophesied calamity if not for himself, at least for the institution which he served. If he noticed her pale looks it was to attribute them to the recent anxiety. As he bent over her to kiss her good-by, she bit her tongue to hold back her unspoken question: "Jim, what is there between you and Violet Durham?"

A sure intuition, stronger than instinct, held her silent. If a woman sees a thief make off with her diamonds, an open outcry may result in the recovery of her property. But a woman who watches the thievery of something dearer yet knows that to open her mouth in jealous protest is to make her loss not only certain but irreparable.

"Good-by, dear Jim. Good luck!" said Ellen, and was silent.

Her little housekeeping tasks attended to, she wandered miserably about the apartment. The words of her own impassioned plea of two nights before, came back to her mind. "Dear Jim, the first secret that has ever been between us! Something dreadful will come of it—it frightens me!" If it had frightened her then, it terrified her now with the black panic of a child waking alone in the night. All about her was darkness. What that darkness concealed she knew not.

Faintly within her, more faintly but still audibly, the rational part of her pleaded on the side of peace. "If you respect your husband," argued logic and common sense, "then you know that beneath the most equivocal situation there can be nothing to distress you. If, on the other hand, you know that this reason for distress really exists, then it is plain that Jim is not a man to be respected or valued at all. Hence, why wring your soul in this anguish for him?"

But this special pleading, however logical and ingenious, was knocked out of court by the mere blind pain of the doubt itself. And shriller and more convincing yet rose the voice of the devil's advocate, marshaling the facts which proved Jim Palliser a traitor; and hence, by the cruelly paradoxical law that governs these things, not to be scorned and forgotten by the woman he had betrayed, but to be the more intensely and rackingly desired.

That, by a sacrifice even more poignant and daring than that which she herself had proposed, this other woman had won Jim's safety added not only a pang to Ellen's sorrow but another factor to the weight of cumulative proof. Heroic as was the stroke by which she herself had proposed to save him, Violet's heroism had been greater still. In a cruelly grudging pang she owned as much; and her heart contracted painfully as she realized that, dear as her husband had previously been to her, he had risen immeasurably, hideously, by this revelation of the value which another woman set upon him.

She herself had stood ready for his sake to part with the last shred of her worldly possessions; but Violet Durham had been ready to risk her name and position as well. For a woman to go to her husband's office in broad daylight, and sheltered only by the word of an office-boy and a venal watchman, to rob her husband's safe of the papers which he prized—here was a daring stroke which in any other cause might have moved Ellen's admiration. As it was, the desperate devotion which it argued could move nothing but her horror. Urged by what motive, with hope of what reward, does a woman face ruin so complete as discovery must en-

tail upon Violet Durham? And the man who accepts so immense and heroic a sacrifice, does he accept it with no return, or——

At this point thought ceased. Passion rose and grew dominant. Her eye fell on her toilet-table, on the little red-labeled bottle which still showed its sinister letters behind the glittering crystal. She gazed at it fascinated. If what she feared was true, then why should she live? Her life had been in the love of her husband. If he had ceased to love her, then why should she continue to live?

With a fierce assertion of its healthy young life, her whole nature reacted against this morbid impulse. She fled from the room in a kind of panic. But the question followed her: If what she feared was true?

Sudden impulse urged her to the telephone; to call up her husband this instant, to tell him what she knew, and demand the truth.

She clenched her hands. "I won't ask him," she said. "I won't, I won't! Good Heavens, I hope I'm still sane enough to know that if I don't want to lose him once and for all, *he's* the last person in the world for me to ask!"

She stopped short. An idea had come to her, suggested by her own words. Jim was the last person in the world of whom she might advantageously demand the explanation which might end her torment. But there was one other person in the world who knew the truth.

Ellen drew in her breath, then exhaled it in a long sigh which seemed for an instant to release the galling stricture of silence in which her soul was bound. With her own hands to tear down this wall of mystery and of silence; without risking a scene of jealous violence between herself and her husband, to have the truth as it stood between them. To go to Violet Durham and face to face, quite candidly and calmly, to ask an explanation of the curious facts disclosed in the last few days.

No, it was impossible—impossible!

Ellen, ringing for Armandine, began a careful toilet for the street. Her mouth was dry, and her head pounded as she remembered it to have done once before at a school-exhibition, when she was a little girl. For one whose sole intention was a brisk constitutional in the Park, this mounting excitement was strangely out of place.

For, her idea of going with an acknowledgment of her distress to the very woman who had caused it—it was absurd. In the first place such a step would be an unbearable humiliation, and Ellen was proud. In the second it would be flamboyantly theatrical, and she loved the quiet conventions and restraints of the society to which she belonged. To expose her doubts of her own husband to this woman who was really a stranger to her, to ask as a gift from the woman she despised the treasure that was hers by right—Ellen's face burned suddenly scarlet at the thought, so that Armandine stared in curiosity at the flushed reflection in the mirror before her.

No, she would not go to that woman! The idea was impossible, unthinkable! The vision came back to her of Violet as she had herself beheld her at her own dinner-table, fair and sumptuous, with the half-veiled insolence of the successful beauty in her hard blue eyes. To display her suffering to the glance of those eyes seemed impossible. It *was* impossible, Ellen repeated with energy. Yet all the time that she so fiercely reiterated to herself the utter impossibility of such a step, she found herself drawn, irresistibly and fatally drawn, toward the very interview that she disowned. The thing that cast the deciding weight in the scale of her indecision was the sight of her own little brass bed, as she turned toward the door.

The memory of last night came back over her with a rush that caught her breath. No, she must sleep to-night—if not the sleep of joyous relief, then the sleep of despair. This torturing indecision, which beat her spirit to and fro like a tormented shuttlecock, was no longer to be borne. The interview with Violet Durham would be painful enough; its result might be more painful yet. Of that Ellen had to take her

risk. In all this horror of uncertainty, one thing only was sure. She knew now that this rack of unverified suspicion happened to be the one particular kind of suffering that she could not bear.

Her resolution was taken.

CHAPTER XI.

"Mrs. Durham wishes me to tell you, madam, that she is just 'aving 'er electric massage. But if you wish to wait, she will be 'appy to see you in about fifteen minutes."

Ellen nodded. "Please tell Mrs. Durham that I will wait."

With noiseless footsteps the butler withdrew and she was left alone.

Now that Ellen was on the very verge of the interview which for her must mean so much, the horror which had confused her senses had disappeared. Her temples no longer throbbed, her hands no longer trembled. All her faculties seemed strangely exalted, like one who is scaling a precipice notes not only each jut and fissure of his airy foothold, but the color and shape of every lichen and every stain.

Her eyes, roving about the room, took in each detail of the luxury with which the middle-aged banker had surrounded his young wife. The rugs, the pictures, the embroidered window hangings with the view of the Park's yellowing leaves between—all were beyond criticism as they were beyond the envy of the more moderately placed. In situation as in furnishings, the house was the finest that New York could supply.

Ellen's mind was divided between two amazements; first, that the master of so much splendor should have descended to so beggarly a trick as that which Mr. Durham had proposed; secondly and more painful yet, a horrified realization of what must be felt by the woman who for Jim's sake had been ready to risk her position as mistress of so regal a house.

With every nerve still strained to its utmost tension, her brain rehearsed the coming scene. In the extraordinary nature of the feelings which possessed her, she had lost all comprehension of the extraordinary interview which she proposed. To question this woman, whom she barely knew, on the hidden secret of her life, and in return to display her own most sacredly guarded feelings, seemed now to Ellen a step not only inevitable but perfectly natural. The theatrical quality of the whole affair, from which at first she had shrunk, seemed now totally lost and merged in a kind of desperate sanity. She was doing what she was doing, not because she wanted to or even because she judged it best, but because it was the only thing for her to do.

Her eye, roving again over the subdued elegance of the room, was caught by the glimpse of something familiar. There from the shelf of a corner cabinet, the light was given back from gilt letters that she had seen before:

"The Greater Purity."

Her heart seemed to stand still. Was this a mere coincidence? Could her reason doubt that here before her was the very book of the morning's adventure, clinching its own proofs? Though he had been guilty of one piece of carelessness, it was evident that in the end the pink-faced office-boy had fulfilled his trust.

There was a faint rustle on the stair, soft with the swish of silk. Then a gust of perfume, and Violet Durham entered the room with hand sweetly outstretched.

"My dear Mrs. Palliser! How very charming! Won't you sit down again, please? And will you have some tea?"

Ellen murmured some polite banality in reply as she sank back into her chair. The woman before her, in all her opulence of polished skin and of shimmering silk, seemed less an actual personality than the visible projection of her own violent thought. She needed a moment to adjust herself to the fact that Mrs. William Durham existed not only as a baleful influence remote and fatal like that of an unlucky star, but who, as a human individuality with manicured hands and marcelled hair, had a will and a tongue of her own.

But the purpose which had brought

Ellen to this house was too immense and too vital to be long set aside by the barriers of conventionality with which she found herself faced. Her desperate need whipped her flagging resolution. Her imagination, strained and exalted, looked past her hostess' jerky talk and busy teacups into the wide-open, beautiful blue eyes from which her wary soul gazed out. Despite her determined ease of manner, the eyes with which Mrs. Durham regarded her visitor were the eyes of a woman who stands on guard; and over the scarlet surface of her under lip, her white teeth preyed ceaselessly. To Ellen's excited fancy it seemed that before she had framed the words, her own glance had asked her desperate question and met with the clash of a cold rebuff.

"Mrs. Durham!" she said suddenly.

Her hostess stopped short in a careful discussion of the merits of a new soprano. This time openly and without disguise the message flashed from brown eyes to blue. Ellen wet her lips. The words said themselves.

"I want to speak to you, Mrs. Durham, about my husband," she said.

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the click of the hostess' cup as she set it down upon the table. When her reply came, it was a surprise to Ellen.

"That will be very nice, Mrs. Palliser," Violet answered sweetly. "You know your husband and I used to be *such* friends, in the old office days before I married!"

Ellen stared bewildered.

"Mrs. Durham," she said, "what's the use of pretenses between you and me? You have done a kind action. That is, if you do not hesitate to acknowledge it I shall know that it was as kindly meant as it was kindly done. You took the incriminating papers from Mr. Durham and gave them back to my husband —didn't you?"

Desperately her bright eyes searched the cold face before her. Concealment was what she dreaded. Concealment was that blank wall behind which lurked the deadly phantasms which poisoned her peace. One word of frank acknowledgment, if not from the man concerned then from the woman herself, and Ellen would be only too glad to believe the whole transaction one of mere generous friendship. She sat leaning forward with clenched hands and with imploring eyes, waiting for the word that did not come.

"Papers?" repeated Violet, with a kind of violent calmness, though a faint flicker of her nostril made more doubtful the calm within. "No, I haven't seen any incriminating papers, Mrs. Palliser, I assure you. And I haven't seen your husband either—since your very charming dinner the other night!"

Her eyes, stony and smiling, met those of her guest. Ellen sickened suddenly. It was evident that the hope of a friendly service, to be frankly owned by the woman who had rendered it, was as hollow as her reason had declared it to be.

She hesitated a moment. Conventional politeness had failed. Her weapon now must be the naked truth. She rose to her feet and crossed the room slowly to where the gilt letters of the familiar title glittered in the shadowy corner. Violet followed her with wary eyes. She did not even start when Ellen, fingering the leaves rapidly, turned to the betraying page where Jim's familiar handwriting stared up at her in damning detail.

"Look, Mrs. Durham," she said quietly.

This time a slight flush stole up under the smooth white face that bent itself for an instant over the book that Ellen extended. The reply, however, was spoken with the utmost self-possession.

"Dear me, it's Mr. Palliser's handwriting, isn't it? 'Vouchers, five in all.' " Violet knit her brows over the script. " 'Pale blue paper, stamp of Achaguas Rubber Co.' Dear me! It's a business memorandum, isn't it!"

Ellen drew in her breath hard. "This is your book, isn't it, Mrs. Durham?"

"It's my book, certainly, Mrs. Palliser," retorted her hostess, allowing for the first time a faint hint of combative-

ness to creep into her silky tones. "Would it be very indiscreet of me to ask how you happened——"

She paused significantly. Her visitor finished her question for her.

"How I happened to know what was written in your book, Mrs. Durham? Day before yesterday, your book was handed to me by mistake, down at the office. I happened to turn the pages, I happened to come on my husband's handwriting. Listen, I will admit to you frankly the other points with which I cannot but connect it." Rapidly and in a voice that began to tremble with her rising emotion, Ellen enumerated briefly the story of the past three days. "Mrs. Durham," she cried as she finished, "you understand now why it is that I have no choice but to come to you, don't you? I love my husband. It is impossible that I can live with this horrible doubt between us. Will you give me now the acknowledgment and the reassurance for which I beg you?"

The desperate pleading of her eyes was met with a stony smile. "I have only one acknowledgment and one reassurance to give you, my dear Mrs. Palliser," returned her hostess, with a somewhat bored politeness, "and that is to repeat the fact that I am as ignorant of your husband's private affairs as you yourself appear to be. Mr. Palliser and I are good friends and old acquaintances—nothing more."

"Nor ever were?" asked Ellen in a low voice.

"Nor ever were," replied the other calmly.

Ellen drew a long breath. With the utterance of this proven lie, it seemed to her that the conversation had passed from a vaguely ladylike discussion into the region of a real and living struggle. And with the suddenness of that realization came the will to fight for her own. With fingers that trembled slightly she opened the gold bag that hung on her wrist, and drew from it a letter, cream-laid and gold-embossed.

"Look, Mrs. Durham," she said quietly.

The face before her strove hard to maintain its lines of complacent superiority. But in the eyes leaped suddenly the light of recognition and of fear. For a moment the two women confronted each other; and the silence was sharp and tense as that which in a duel precedes the dropping of the handkerchief. Violet spoke first, in a dry and changed tone.

"Did Jim give you that letter, Mrs. Palliser?" she asked.

"You know my husband better than that, Mrs. Durham," returned Ellen briefly. "Mr. Palliser does not even know that I have it. It fell into my hands by accident, two years ago. I have never mentioned it to him. I should never have mentioned it to you, had you not refused me all justification of these painful suspicions that have brought me to you."

Violet's lips, as they framed her reply, stood out in startling and metallic brilliance on her white face, and her reply was another question.

"Are you going to show that letter to my husband, Mrs. Palliser?"

"I deserve the reproach of your suspicion," returned Ellen slowly. "It was unworthy of me to read this letter when I came across it, it was unworthy of me to bring it here to-day. But at least, I brought it with no worse motive than that which I have stated to you; to show you how useless are these denials of the truth, between you and me. Again I ask you for the truth—I only ask you, remember, I do not try to buy it. I am no blackmailer, Mrs. Durham. Here is your letter."

Violet's fingers, with their glittering pink nails, closed around the offered document in a clutch which showed at once her agony and her relief. She paused for one instant to snatch the letter from its envelope, to glance over its contents. Then, as though she could not bear to grant one more instant of life to the thing which had vanquished even her cool self-control, she began tearing letter and envelope together into narrow strips, then crosswise into tiny pieces. She tore viciously, with a crackling of the paper. Then, with an odd secretive gesture, she stuffed the handful of rubbish that re-

mained into a convenient vase. When her eyes again met those of her guest, it was with a desperate attempt to ignore not only the destroyed document but the message that it had brought between them.

"Poor old Jim!" she said, with elaborate carelessness. "You must excuse my speaking of him like that, Mrs. Palliser, but you see, he and I were *such* chums, down there in the office before Mr. Durham married poor little me. It was the most innocent, boy-and-girl flirtation in the world—but I own, I wouldn't like to have my husband know of it. He's older than me, you know, and it makes him so ridiculously jealous. But you, Mrs. Palliser, you've more sense, I'm sure. And if a woman's going to worry over her husband's little affairs before he married her——"

"It's not over that I'm worrying, Mrs. Durham," interrupted Ellen calmly, though her heart was pounding. "Mr. Palliser's life before his marriage belongs to him, not to me. But this past week—now that you see how much I know of the truth, Mrs. Durham, won't you set my mind at rest about this business of the Achaguas papers?"

Violet arched her delicately penciled eyebrows. "As I understand you, Mrs. Palliser, and the facts you have related to me, you are asking me to acknowledge that I went to Mr. Durham's office in his absence, and opened his safe, and stole from him certain papers that I afterward delivered to Jim."

"Not delivered to him yet," interrupted Ellen steadily. "He told me the other day, the documents were safe but not yet in his hands. He promised to let me know when he received them. So, Mrs. Durham, don't you understand what it is that I ask of you?"

"You ask me," returned her hostess with a defiant smile, "to own myself a criminal. Even supposing I had done what you charge me with, suppose I had, for old sake's sake, made myself a thief in order to save my old friend Jimmy Palliser, don't you think that, if you love him as you claim, you ought to be thanking me on your knees, instead of asking me to run the risk of divorce and criminal prosecution and all kinds of horrors, just to please you?"

At the ruthless logic of these words Ellen rose and came to her hostess with outstretched hands. The truth which she so dearly loved had at last been uttered between them. And even though in this case the truth fought not for but against her, she welcomed it as a gallant enemy with which she had the weapons to cope.

"No, Mrs. Durham, no!" she cried. "Don't you see I'm asking you for nothing of the kind? Don't you understand that instead of asking you to run any risk of exposure, it would be my interest as much as my husband's, as much as your own, to hide from everybody the bold stroke by which you saved him? And don't you see that I'd be the first to thank you—on my knees as you say—if only I could know that it was done for old sake's sake? I can give up to you the privilege of saving him—to you who once loved him and whom he once loved, provided only that I may know, that love is all in the past. Tell me that what you did for my husband was done for the sake of the memory of what once existed between you—for that memory and nothing more!"

Violet hesitated as she twisted the diamond circlet on her plump white wrist. Her voice was slightly unsteady as she answered; and its unguarded inflections, with their suggestions of remote boarding-house days, spoke an agitation which rather surprised her listener.

"And if I should own—well!" Again the glittering circlet spun about on her wrist. "If I should own, I have always felt more or less ashamed of the mean trick I played Jimmy five years ago, when I threw him over—poor boy, he *was* cut up, though I'm sure," with an agreeable smile, "he's had it all made up to him since, Mrs. Palliser. But if I should own that I have always felt awfully friendly for him ever since, so that when he came and told me about his trouble and asked me to help, I was just awfully glad to do it—well, then,

that would satisfy you? Just good old pals, you understand, nothing more or less. And I'm sure anyhow, Mrs. Palliser, that anything I've done for dear Jim I've done just as much for your sake as his—and anything I could do to prove it, I'm sure would be done with pleasure; especially after your being so nice about giving me back that silly old letter!"

Violet's speech, with its jumble of facts and protestations, with its galling assertion of ownership in Jim, with its half-acknowledgment of the truth, with its florid offer of friendly service—all this fell in confusion upon Ellen's bewildered and suffering heart. What had she gained, after all, by baring its secrets to this woman who was one moment her enemy, another her friend, shifty and unfathomable always? In the whole baffling medley of Violet's speech, the last words only stood out clear and definite, with a suggestion which struck the flash of a sudden idea from Ellen's whirling brain.

"Mrs. Durham," she said suddenly, "you say that you are my friend—you say that what you have done for my husband, you have done for my sake as well as for his—and anything you could do to prove it, you would do for me with a real pleasure?"

Violet's head, with its shining marcel waves, bobbed in a nod of assent, but her bright eyes glanced sideways in an uncontrollable wariness. "A very real pleasure, Mrs. Palliser," she repeated in mincing accents of elegance.

"Then," cried Ellen desperately, "don't meet him again! Look, I humble my pride to you, I own that the thought of this secret understanding between you and my husband tortures me beyond my endurance. You have told me that your interest in each other is a thing of the past, you can have no possible desire to see him again. Let me be your messenger to him, and I'll accept your kindness for him and for myself, with all the gratitude of my heart. Of your own free will you offered to prove to me that I have no cause for these doubts that are torturing me, and here I point out to you the way that you can prove it. Dear Mrs. Durham, give me the papers and let me take them home to Jim from you!"

Violet hesitated. Her glittering finger-tips toyed with her glittering rings. Then she broke out into a little nervous laugh.

"Now how ridiculous, my dear Mrs. Palliser! I do assure you, you are making a mountain out of a mole-hill. If you are really uneasy for fear of a flirtation between good old Jimmy and me, then I gave you my word, and I give it to you again, I haven't flirted with him and I won't—not one single scrap. But as for handing over any papers to you, even if I had them——"

"Then you refuse this proof of your friendship, Mrs. Durham, which you offered me of your own accord, and which is the first and only one that I ask of you?"

Violet's fingers twisted together on her lap. She raised her eyes, drew a little unsteady breath, then answered slowly: "What you ask is impossible, Mrs. Palliser."

Ellen stood for a moment in silence. That the woman before her would grant her the conclusive test that she proposed, she had hardly ventured to hope. But neither had she realized that Violet might dare an outright denial. For Violet to refuse the papers to her was tantamount to the open confession of another meeting, in the near future, between her and Jim. Another meeting—like the last? In a sudden qualm of deadly sickness that seemed almost physical, there rushed back upon her that corroding vision of last night—the picture of that little dinner-table for two, in what quarter of the city she knew not, where Jim sat and smiled into those hard, beautiful blue eyes, those eyes which grew who could say how soft for him?

The thought evoked in her heart feelings that were new to her experience, and which frightened her even more than the thought of her own desolation. Like a virginal savage struggling against the fumes of newly tasted wine, Ellen fought back the bitter rage and hatred which possessed her. As her

eyes surveyed the complacent beauty before her, it seemed to her that her heart understood with terrifying distinctness the impulse under which murder is done.

"Mrs. Durham!" she said in a voice which sounded oddly in her own ears.

Her hostess glanced at her sideways, a little frightened glance. Ellen spoke slowly and distinctly, trying to frame her words not in the pain which racked her, but in the reasonableness of what she felt to be her right.

"Mrs. Durham, as James Palliser's wife I refuse my countenance to this secret association between you and my husband. I refuse my consent to this aid which you offer in such a manner. And now, I have the honor to wish you a very good day."

"Mrs. Palliser, wait one moment!"

Ellen, turning, was arrested by her hostess' shrill voice, rising suddenly from its laboriously acquired elegance. And from the face which Violet showed her, the mask of cold and dawdling indifference had suddenly dropped away. In the eyes confronting her she read hatred as bitter as that which stirred deep in her own heart, but more vulgarly plain.

"Mrs. Palliser, what do you mean when you say that you refuse your consent to any aid I might offer to Jim?"

"Just that," returned Ellen steadily. "I am going home now to tell my husband that I undersand this affair to the fullest detail. And I shall inform him, I must refuse my consent to his being saved in such a manner."

Violet laughed brokenly. In the uneven tone of her voice, in the blood which mantled her white skin, there was evident a strong though concealed feeling which had power to shake even her stony confidence. She spoke in a tone of laborious gentleness:

"My dear Mrs. Palliser, how droll! Is Jimmy so docile? He didn't *use* to be!"

"My husband would not willingly lose my respect," answered Ellen briefly.

"He would prefer to lose—excuse me, but since we seem to be speaking the truth to each other, you know as well as I do what it is that I have saved him from."

"I myself am prepared to save him from that danger, Mrs. Durham. The aid that he may not accept from another woman, he may with propriety take from his wife."

"You are so sure, then, that it will be so easy to save him?"

"I did not say that it would be easy, Mrs. Durham. But as for being sure—there should be nothing surer, I think, than the possibility of saving an innocent man from the consequence of somebody's else sin."

With a rustle of her shimmering tea-gown, Violet jumped to her feet. Again the peal of broken laughter fluttered from her lips. In the eyes which she bent upon Ellen, her feeling for Ellen's husband stood suddenly revealed like the irresistible flash of a leaping flame.

And Ellen, meeting the revelation of those eyes, realized for the first time fully the fierce hidden forces against which she had to contend. Against the passion of the woman before her, she had only the force of her own love to bring. Jim Palliser, standing as it were between the two women, was no longer the handsome, easy-going club-man, with the agreeable qualities and the weaknesses of his age and class. He had become suddenly the symbol of forces stronger than life itself. He was the embodiment of that moving spirit which lies beyond personality, which the ancients called Aphrodite and the moderns call the Life Force; but which in any case crumples up every scruple and every other desire like a handful of straw.

The two women glared at each other, and Violet laughed again.

"An innocent man, Mrs. Palliser? What do you mean?"

"Just that. As you know, my husband has committed no crime."

"Then—pardon me—what is this danger from which he has to be saved, either by you or by me?"

"You know, Mrs. Durham. Under false pretenses, your husband ob-

tained from Jim those papers which show him guilty of a crime which he never committed. If those papers are brought into court then my husband, who is innocent, must be held responsible for the missing funds which were in reality appropriated and lost by Mr. Durham himself."

Violet's glittering hands caught at a chair-back for support. She rocked back and forth with laughter. Her eyes shone strangely bright in her colorless face.

"My dear woman, what are you saying? Do I really understand you correctly? Do you mean to say you believe that Jim is *innocent?*"

Ellen lifted her head haughtily. "My husband is an innocent man. I have his word for it," she returned, with cold precision.

Violet's laughter rippled in broken gasps of amusement. "Excuse me for laughing this way, Mrs. Palliser, but really it strikes me as too comical! So Jimmy has been telling you that he never borrowed a cent of the Patroons money, never lost it in Wall Street, never did anything but sign papers for the naughty villain that plotted to throw all the blame on him afterward—just like the hero in the play! Poor old Jimmy! And I've given him away! But how would I suspect that he'd ever given you a hot-air gag like that, Mrs. Palliser? And you mean to say, you *believed* him?"

"I believed him, and I believe him now," answered Ellen in an unfaltering voice, though her heart was sick within her in a strange new qualm unknown until now. The illusion of being suspended over a bottomless abyss, which had visited her yesterday, had returned with a reality of sensation which nearly overcame her.

After all, what security had she that in the tale of Mr. Durham's elaborate treachery, Jim had spoken the truth? His bare word.

In a flash of memory that smote her like a physical blow, she remembered Mr. Durham's benignant yet stern surprise, when two days ago she had charged him with the crime which Jim had attributed to him. She remembered Belden's face of unbelief, his refusal to appear as his friend's champion on the strength of the latter's unsupported word. She remembered what the keenest lawyer in New York, according to Jim's own acknowledgment, had said. One and all, they had swept aside as absurd the scapegoat story that was Jim's defense. They had accepted the facts, they had refused his word. She alone had accepted his word, as she accepted God's. But now in his concealed association with this woman once openly beloved, he had struck straight at the very foundations of his wife's faith in him. How could she be certain of him any more? How could she ever be certain of anything again?

Jim, an embezzler? Jim, her husband, a liar and a sneak?

Thought was crushed from her mind. She was conscious only of a rising vertigo. Though beneath it stirred an instinct which bade her conceal her anguish from the cynical blue eyes that regarded her.

"Guess you aren't quite so certain, after all, Mrs. Palliser," remarked Violet softly.

With a fierce stiffening of her muscles, Ellen controlled herself. The sickness passed. Her forces were her own again as she replied:

"I believed my husband, Mrs. Durham. I believe him still absolutely and without question!"

"That is," returned Violet, with another ripple of her keen-edged laughter, "you believe what he told *you*, or what he told *me!*"

The intimacy thus implied was to Ellen like a blow in her face. She spoke with cold determination and a deliberate thrust.

"It seems more reasonable, Mrs. Durham, that Jim should speak the truth to me, his wife who loves him, than to you, an outsider and a stranger. And now, it really seems to me that we have nothing more left to say to each other."

As she turned again with a brief gesture of farewell, Violet came swooping down upon her. Her face was crimson, her eyes were sparkling, wide

open. Passion was in her glance, in her voice as she spoke; passion long-pent, but now stirred to the quick and bursting from its restraint.

"An outsider and a stranger!" she cried in hoarse repetition of Ellen's words. "How dare you, Mrs. Palliser? How dare you call me that—me, who saved Jim from jail and worse? Me, who ran risks to save him that *you* wouldn't run, though you are his wife and so proud of it! And he knows it! He knows that I'd do for him what you wouldn't do! Wasn't it to me he came when he needed help? Wasn't it to me he told the truth—the truth he was scared to tell to you? You call me an outsider if you like, but when the pinch came it was me he trusted, not you. He came to me—do you know why? Do you know why?"

Her face, kindled to a wild and ferocious beauty, was thrust up into Ellen's. The reckless abandon of her triumph thrilled in her voice and rustled in the very swish of her robe. The breath of her violet perfume rose from her like a stifling aura, sickening Ellen with her physical nearness. "You know why?" Violet repeated with exultation. "You know why Jim came to me and not to you?"

Ellen stood silent. She had the strange sensation of the hunter who, after long tracking of a man-eater, meets at last the destructive horror in the flesh and the very act.

"Because he loves me!" cried Violet. The words seemed to tear themselves from her lips, as though uttered by some force stronger than her worldly prudence, or her sense of expediency and shrewdness. She was possessed by the hysteria of her long-restrained emotion. She seemed actuated by a very fury of desire to trample under foot the woman who had denied her right in the man she claimed.

"He loves me, Jim does!" she cried again in a voice that thrilled and ran with the violence of her feeling. "He loves me, and I love him! Ever since the old days when we belonged to each other—to each other, do you understand that? But I threw him over because I thought I loved money more, so I gave him up for this!" She flung out her arm in a gesture of furious contempt. "Then I found out my mistake. I broke his heart, then I found out I'd broken my own! But I knew he'd come back to me some day, so I waited. Nobody knew, but I was waiting. And at last he came, he came!"

Ellen took in her breath. Her tortured eyes, roving to the doorway behind her hostess, met suddenly the glance of another pair of eyes, grim and watchful. The listener had crept upon them like a shadow, but stood there in flesh-and-blood reality. He raised his hand in a gesture that commanded silence. Ellen's first impulse was to compass her own revenge by giving no warning to the frenzied woman before her. Her second was more generous. She clutched Violet's outstretched arm.

"Hush, Mrs. Durham, hush!" she said imperatively.

"I won't!" screamed Violet. "I love Jim Palliser and he loves me! We belong to each other, do you understand that? Do you understand?"

"Mr. Durham," said Ellen quietly, addressing the figure in the doorway, "I will leave your wife to you. I am afraid that she is very ill."

Mr. Durham came forward slowly. In spite of her abhorrence of the man, Ellen was forced to admire the perfection of his self-control as he laid his withered hand upon his wife's white shoulder.

"Violet!" he said.

She spun around to confront him. His face was a peculiar ashen tint which at one stroke had added twenty years to his age. His clean-shaven jaw was firmly clenched, but the throbbing pulse in his cheek showed the feeling within; and his eyes were those of a man who looks on an open grave.

"Violet!" he said again huskily.

She shook his hand from her shoulder with a violence which for the moment overcame even that imperious touch.

"You know now!" she cried, with a shaking burst of laughter. "Very well, it can't be helped. And at least I

haven't got to kill myself with keeping silent, as I have done all these years. What do I care? For if I suffer, that woman has got to suffer, too!" Her shaking hand flung itself out in a gesture toward the shrinking Ellen. "It's all your doing!" she screamed again, in a very luxury of hysteria. "You wouldn't let me save Jim, and now he's lost. You can whistle for those papers. Do you think I'll stir a finger now to save him? Do you think my husband will be inclined to spare him, after this? No, Jim Palliser is bound straight for Sing Sing now, and it's you that sent him there! It's you that sent him there, remember that!"

Between the white face of Ellen and the stricken age of her husband, Violet's bright figure glowed like that of a Mænad transported with the rage of her own ungoverned passion. Of the three unself-conscious beings, Ellen Palliser was the first to recover herself. Not only the insults of her hostess, but the despair which sat like death on the wrinkled face of the man beside her, made any attempt at formal leave-taking an impossible thing. Turning her back on the two desperate beings who stood like wax statues before her, she walked softly from the room and from the house.

As Mrs. Durham had said, her meddling had served only to bring ruin to all concerned. The suffering which an hour ago had been hers alone was now by her act the common property of all four. And above the memory of the despair she had left behind her, above the revelation of his guilt, of his love for another woman, dinned and pounded the relentless truth of Violet's last words.

Jim Palliser was bound straight for Sing Sing and it was she herself—she herself, his wife, who had sent him there!

CHAPTER XII.

It was ten o'clock before Palliser turned the key of his apartment and entered; for his wife, on her return home three hours before, had been met by Nikeda with a telephone-message from the master of the house, telling that he could not be home to dinner and might not be home till late. He was now returning home, to tell the truth, rather earlier than he had intended. Disappointment lay on his face. His handsome features were clouded with a vague trouble which might, or might not be accounted for by the headlines of the evening paper over which, as he laid down his hat and coat, he threw a hasty eye:

> Williams & Co. suspend. Another Big Brokerage House Goes to the Wall. Bad Slump in Prices. Nervousness of Traders. Disquieting Rumors Involve Trust Companies. Durham of the Patroons Declares in an Interview——

With a gesture of impatience Palliser threw the paper to the floor. Then he raised his voice and called:

"Ellen!"

There was no answer. He called again. A few steps brought him to the door of her bedroom. It was empty. He turned hastily toward the little drawing-room.

"Nelly, dear, where are you?"

Again no answer. But as he entered the fire-lit room, he beheld her sitting by the hearth.

The face which she turned toward him was fixed and white in the firelight, with a look of grief so dreadful as to bring him up all standing in the doorway.

"Ellen, my dearest. What has happened?"

He ran toward her as though to take her in his arms. She shrank away, and forced her colorless lips into a smile that was like the convulsive clenching of a fist.

"Nothing has happened, Jim. Sit down, dear. I want to talk to you."

Her words and gesture were those of affection, but her eyes were the eyes of doubt. For a moment, brief as the whistling of a bullet, they looked at each other. Then Ellen spoke again.

"Jim, have you the papers?"

He started, hesitated. "The evening paper, dear? It's in the hall. I'm afraid there's a bad crash coming —"

"No, Jim, you know what papers I

mean. The Achaguas papers, that were to save you from jail. Have they been given to you yet?"

Again Palliser hesitated. The look of careworn perplexity that had darkened his bright face upon his entrance fell again over the keener fear with which he regarded his wife. But he spoke cheerfully:

"No, my dear. To tell the truth, they were to be handed me to-night, at dinner. But for some reason the party failed to make connections. But don't worry, darling, I'll surely have them to-morrow."

Ellen rose to her feet. Her voice was torn from her like the cry of a trapped quarry:

"No, Jim, you won't have them to-morrow!"

His jaw dropped. He remained staring at her.

"You'll never have them now, Jim. Never, never!"

She sank back into her chair and covered her face. With a swift change of expression her husband bent over her.

"Ellen," he said, with determination, "what are you talking about? What do you know about those papers?"

Her voice came muffled from behind her palms.

"Jim, I went to see Violet Durham this afternoon."

There was a pause, while the clock ticked and the logs crackled upon the hearth. With eyes that took curious note of each detail, Palliser stared at their leaping flames and ramparts of rosy white ash. Ellen's head was bent, and her stillness was not the stillness of living flesh but of death.

The man spoke first, after a deep breath.

"Then that explains it!"

"Explains what?"

"Why I didn't have the papers to-night as was agreed. I'll never have them now of course, as you say. Ellen, why did you go to Violet Durham?"

"Because—I had found out. I couldn't ask you. I had to be certain. So I went and asked her."

"Precisely." Palliser's tone was dry and expressionless. "And what did she tell you, my dear?"

"She told me everything, Jim—everything!"

"Ah! That was kind of her, indeed. And what happened then?"

"Mr. Durham came in."

"*What?*"

"Mr. Durham came in, Jim."

Palliser turned his head slowly. "And how much was told to him?"

Ellen swallowed hard before she could answer the truth. "Everything."

"What? You told, or Violet told?"

"Neither of us. He heard. He understands everything now. Even if she forgives, he never will."

"Ah!" At these last words, Palliser's irritation against his chief overcame even his mounting despair. "And was anybody looking for Mr. Durham's forgiveness?"

She raised her head. "You don't understand, dear Jim. He had promised to let me buy those papers from him, myself. Now, of course, the idea is useless."

Palliser whistled between his teeth. His face was curiously constricted. "You are right! The medicine is poured and we must drink it. Now that the old scoundrel knows how nearly he was outwitted, he won't be turned aside again of course."

"My dear Jim, why do you call him an old scoundrel?" Ellen's voice was one of an infinite sadness.

The color leaped into Jim Palliser's dark cheek. "Ellen, you have ruined me. But I make you no reproaches for your interference, as you will please notice. But this is a bit too much. You ask me why I call Durham a scoundrel —*you?*"

Ellen met his angry eyes with a grieved firmness. "Yes, Jim, I. Didn't I tell you, Mrs. Durham has told me everything?"

"Indeed!" returned her husband, with the suspicion of a sneer. "And did the *everything* which she so kindly confided to you, include the information that her husband is not what I have called him?"

Ellen's anguish broke suddenly from

the bonds in which she had confined it. Her voice went in a long shattering cry.

"Jim, don't! I have ruined you, I own that. I have to be ashamed for myself—don't force me to be ashamed for my husband, too!"

Her words did not move him, though the red flush faded from his face. He surveyed her doggedly.

"If you choose to be ashamed for your husband's misfortune you may do so, Ellen, though I own it is not what I had expected from you. As for enlisting the help of an old friend to steal back the documents that incriminated me, I will own the proceeding was a doubtful one. But after all, my dear child, it was my own property, wrongfully withheld, that was stolen back for me. And you, yourself, if you remember, had told me to use any means I found possible!"

"Yes, Jim, I did and I meant it. But oh, my dearest—why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me?"

Over Palliser's face of brooding desperation fell a slight shade of embarrassment. "I should have, probably—I wanted to. But you see, the business was a risky one for Mrs. Durham, and when she made a condition of strict secrecy——"

"That's not what I mean, Jim! I could bear that. But why didn't you tell me what you told her?"

Palliser took a step toward her. She rose to her feet. Their eyes were nearly on a level. He spoke in a quick breath.

"I told you everything, Ellen. What do you mean?"

"Why do you ask me that question, Jim? You know what I mean. You trusted that other woman with the truth. Why couldn't you have trusted me—me who love you so?"

He gripped her hands as though he would wring her thought from her finger-tips. "Ellen, tell me what Violet has told you!"

"She only told me what you told her, Jim; that you are guilty of the crime that those papers prove against you."

The stillness of the room was oppressive. The fire, fallen to glowing fluff, had ceased to utter its tiny cannonade. In a thrill of the automatic consciousness which seemed the only part of her to remain alive, Ellen gave thanks for the pain of her tortured fingers. That pain, at any rate, she could bear.

When Palliser spoke again, it was in a changed voice. His wife's last words had removed the dispute between them from the field of distracted emotions, into the larger arena of the affairs of men.

"What are you saying, Ellen?" he asked harshly.

"Mrs. Durham told me that you had admitted the truth to her, but that I had been purposely kept in the dark."

Palliser dropped her hands, and took a turn or two about the room. Then he came back and stood before her drooping figure.

"And you believed her, Ellen?"

She made a gesture of despair. "How do I know? When she told me what was so much worse, and what I *had* to believe!"

Her husband started violently. "Worse than embezzlement and falsehood—what next, Ellen?"

"She told me—that you loved her. That you had loved her for years."

Palliser drew a long breath. His face, if not his voice, said: "*Is that all?*" Then he recurred with fierce insistence to the first accusation. His agitation was visible.

"So you're going back on me, too, Ellen? You're going to believe it was for myself I initialed those fraudulent notes of Henderson's?"

"What do I know?" cried Ellen again, wearily. "And what do I care?"

He flushed a dull brick-red. "I understand you, my dear. Now that I am in trouble, you don't care about me any more. Wasn't it enough to give me a demonstration of this fact, by smashing up the defense that would have saved me from disgrace?"

His tongue stumbled on the word. Horror of the fate that now lay before him was written on his face. But he controlled himself to add:

"Don't you think you might have

spared me the open information that you have ceased to care, Ellen?"

The torturing emotion which for a day and a half had strung Ellen's nerves to their highest tension rose even above the intolerable self-reproach stirred up by her husband's words. The blood rushed to her face and the words to her lips:

"And what did you think I cared about?" she cried. "For money? For business? For banks and rubber companies, and all those trifling outside things that you men hold so important? What does any woman care for childish things like that, except as they affect the man she loves? And I love you. Do you understand what that means? I love you! And beside that fact, what does it matter whether or not you have borrowed money that didn't belong to you, and were cheated out of your hope of paying it back? What does it matter if in the eyes of all the world you are an embezzler and a thief—or even in your own eyes? For me, you are yourself, that's all I know. And what does it matter how great your trouble and your need, so long as you bring your need to me? It's not what's given a woman that satisfies her heart—it's what she is allowed to give: and the greater the need of the man she loves, the greater her opportunity, the greater her joy! You needn't have been afraid to give me your confidence, Jim. I would have only loved you the better for it because I could have given you so much the more; pity and understanding, as well as the few dollars I could scrape together. You remember, I told you how I tried? No, I don't want you to thank me—it's I that owe you the thanks. If you could know the happiness of those days when I thought I was saving you! The joy! The delight!"

She paused, with her hand at her throat. Her husband turned desperately.

"Ellen!" he said.

She interrupted him.

"No! I've done you enough harm since, I own that. But I want you to understand how it came about. I want you to understand what I felt when from one little thing and another little thing, the truth suddenly stood up in front of me."

She paused a moment, and her voice fell from its high tones of challenge into its somber depths. She went on in slow and measured tones:

"While I was working to save you, Jim, you were with that other woman. It was to her you brought your need, and not to me. It was from her hands you took your safety, and not from mine. You accepted her sacrifice and rejected mine—and you never told me. If you had told me, Jim, I might have suffered but I could have understood. But it was all kept a secret from me—from me, your wife."

"It was kept a secret from you," returned her husband in laborious explanation, "because Mrs. Durham, in running so grave a risk, naturally demanded absolute secrecy as to her part in the affair."

"Naturally," returned Ellen dryly. Then, in a tone that showed how she winced from her husband's last words: "So grave a risk, Jim! You yourself give me the word I need, to explain what I have felt. Under what circumstances does a woman risk her very name and position and honor for a man? And what does she expect in return?"

Palliser stirred uneasily. "I don't understand you, Ellen."

"You do, Jim," she returned steadily, "and I think I have the right to ask you now: What is there between this woman and you that you felt at liberty to go to her with a demand so immense?"

Jim hesitated a moment. Despite her judicial utterance, it was in an intolerable agony of suspense that Ellen awaited his reply. For the moment they had forgotten the looming disgrace and worldly ruin which only a few days before had spelled life or death for them, and which must again. As they stood confronting each other, eternal forces held them in a grip which excluded every other consideration, no matter how poignant. After a mental struggle

which showed itself in his mobile face, Jim Palliser spoke.

"You ask me why I went to Violet Durham for help, Ellen? Because I happened to know that, in spite of a few surface vagaries, she is at heart a good sort who could be relied on to do a kind turn for an old friend. You ask me how I happened to know that with such certainty? Very well. I would prefer not to have thrust the matter on your attention at all, but since you have found out so much for yourself, I will admit that Violet and I once were—well, what is vulgarly called awful spoons on each other. A pretty woman like that, right there in the office, at your elbow every day. And I didn't have so many friends in the city as I have now. Well—you understand? If Durham, by the curious freak which sometimes overtakes an elderly man, hadn't cut in and married her, I dare say I would have married her myself. At all events, I was all bowled over when she did throw me down; though I recovered as you know. There, my dear, is the whole truth, which sounds sufficiently brutal as I relate it to you. Do you thank me now for the silence in which I held this portion of my life, or do you want some more?"

Palliser spoke rapidly, recklessly, conscious of the stabs which each word inflicted upon the quivering woman who faced him. She paused a moment to take her breath before she ventured the question with which she answered him:

"One thing more, Jim. Then you—loved her?"

Palliser's annoyance began to show itself at this cross-questioning on a subject for him so extraneous to the real concern of the moment. He answered with deliberation:

"My dear, when I offered you my affection, did I make any pretense that it was a white sheet of paper that had never been written upon? I wish to the Lord it could have been, but at least I never made any pretense, and you took me as I was. And since you ask me pointblank, I'll answer you pointblank: Yes, in the old days before I met you, and when Violet used to meet me downtown for dinner every night, I think I loved her very much indeed."

This admission, made not concerning a woman who hung phantomlike in the past, but one whose ample beauty Ellen had with her own eyes beheld that very afternoon, struck her with a horrible constriction of natural pain. Her voice was a mere whisper as she asked:

"And—that was all, Jim?"

Her husband regarded her steadily. "I see what you mean, Ellen. And I beg to assure you that except for the trifle of throwing over one man to marry another, Violet Durham is as honest a woman as ever lived."

Ellen hesitated. The dreadful words of the afternoon hung still like a scorching cloud over her soul. Certainty she must have, if only for the chance of throwing off this unspeakable oppression.

"Honest with the conventional honesty of woman, Jim, or with the honesty of a human being? Because—forgive me—she can only have one! Am I to believe what you say of her now, or what she herself told me this afternoon?"

"You seem to have had a real heart-to-heart talk with Violet Durham, Ellen," returned her husband, with a kind of desperate coldness. "May I ask, what confidence you refer to now?"

Ellen repeated the words which had penetrated her soul.

"She told me, Jim, that she loved you and that you loved her. She said: 'We belong to each other, Jim and I.'"

These words, which in their sordid finality had seemed to sever all confidence and all bonds between the married pair, were spoken at last and referred to the one who alone could judge them. Ellen leaned back in her chair like one exhausted, shading her eyes with her hand as though from the fading embers of the nearly dead fire.

"And you believed her, Ellen?" asked Palliser hoarsely.

"Would she blacken her own character for nothing, Jim?" returned his wife.

Palliser hesitated, then spoke as though with difficulty.

"Violet Durham, Ellen, is a peculiar woman. For all her worldliness, she is consumed with a passion for romance. In the old days at the office, there was always a paper-covered novel at the back of her desk. She had dreams of turning out a heroine, herself—when she married Durham, I know she thought it was the first step. Well! That disappointed her, so she turns to working up dreams about the past again. And she's the kind that oughtn't to be allowed to dream—nervous, morbid, that kind of thing, you understand? Yes, she's a strange one, Violet is! You'd think to look at her that she was hard as nails. She isn't. She's a neurotic. You've noticed her curious habit of gnawing at her lips, and pulling at the rings on her hands? Nerves, nerves all over! Why, I remember down at the office, the hysterical fits she used to have, when work had been very heavy or she'd been going it a bit strong after hours. If Durham hadn't been soft on her, he never would have stood it. Hysterical fits—screaming and kicking, poor girl, you understand? And when she got taken with a fit like that, she'd blurt out anything."

"Even the truth?" asked Ellen quickly.

Palliser made a gesture of surrender. "A fair point. But in this case, poor Violet blackened herself without cause or foundation. Her weariness in her own married life may have caused her to maintain a romantic ideal of our past attachment—but it was not to that, I give you my honest word, that I appealed in asking her for her help in my troubles. Since the letter she sent me announcing her marriage, five years ago, not a word of love has been spoken between us. In our recent relations, we have met only as friends. In accusing herself of—of other relations with me, she spoke in hysterical self-deception: perhaps—how do I know?—in a wish to revenge herself on you for what she felt as your interference. Will you believe that this is the truth, Ellen? I give you my word of honor as a gentleman."

"Your word of honor as a gentleman," returned Ellen sadly, "but don't you see, that is just what makes your word good for nothing? It is because you are a gentleman that you are bound to defend Mrs. Durham's character; and the more she needs your defense, the more your honor requires that you defend her."

They looked at each other helplessly, as each recognized the truth of her words. From between them the whole happiness of undoubting faith had been swept away. Ellen saw in her husband only the man who in spirit, if not in sordid fact, had broken his most sacred vows. Palliser saw in his wife only the woman whose exacting jealousy had wrecked all chance of escape from the criminal prosecution that waited for him. And in neither was any power to repair the past, or to mend up broken faith.

In a kind of mechanical bitterness, Palliser reverted to his wife's last words.

"And does my honor as a gentleman also require that I lie to you concerning my own conduct in the Achaguas affair, whether I am actually guilty of embezzlement or not?"

"I don't know," returned Ellen helplessly. "Since yesterday morning, the whole foundation of life seems gone. I believe you, of course. But do I *know?*"

Palliser's lips pinched themselves together in a hard dry line. In the wreck which he and fate together had made of his affairs, he had clung desperately to his wife's belief in his innocence; a belief which, as he knew, could be counted upon to persist in the face of legal proofs, of common sense, of the evidence of her own senses.

But now he had struck deeper. By his carelessness or that of some one else, he had undermined the very roots of her faith. The foundations, as she had said, were gone; and through his own fault he was left shelterless in the time of his need. A hot wave of dull anger broke through him. Who was it after all that had snatched from him the defenses that he himself, with some outside aid, had erected?

"You are right, Ellen," he said, "you have no way of knowing whether it was in my own behalf or Durham's that I indorsed those notes, which have robbed the Patroons Trust of a half-million dollars. It's a case of my word against my admitted signature; and since, as you say, my word has ceased to count with you, then how can I expect you to accept it as evidence? Any more than I can expect the bank examiners to accept it, or the directors of the Patroons Trust, or the jury of twelve good men and true who will presently have the pleasure of meeting me. What's the word of a solitary man, against the documentary evidence which has now gone back to Durham?" He stopped, and wrenched his grimly smiling mouth with his hand. "It's a rather tough position for a man to be in, isn't it," he observed, "because his wife happened to be jealous of him? I don't say it wasn't thoughtless of me, to go to poor Violet as I did. But you will own that, for her as well as for me, the result is rather out of proportion to the initial course—however bad you may make it."

Ellen made no answer. She had reached the stage of suffering where emotional and physical exhaustion acts for the moment as its own anodyne. She leaned back in her chair, watching her husband as he tramped restlessly up and down the room.

Suddenly he stopped short before her. "So here we are," he observed, with another little laugh, "after all the fuss and all the pother, back again where we were a week ago. Except with the difference, that now the single loophole is stuffed." He paused, and over his high, clear-cut features came a sudden look that brought Ellen's soul fluttering back from its mists of weariness. "You objected to my own first solution of the matter," he said. "Ellen, do you still refuse?"

The whole confusion of her mind seemed illuminated by a kind of dreadful light. She was conscious only that she loved him. She stretched out her arms to him.

"I still refuse!" she cried in a voice that thrilled with a deeper agony than that which on a former occasion she had sent over the telephone. "Jim, I have done enough to injure you. Don't make me your murderess, my dear!"

He did not seem to notice her gesture. Her arms sank back to her sides. "Perhaps, my dear Ellen," he returned coldly, "you will think differently when the men in uniform are walking in at the door and you see the Black Maria waiting outside."

"Promise me," she cried, leaping convulsively to her feet, "promise me that you won't touch yourself to-night!"

"I promise," he said, with indifference, and then added kindly: "So far as that is concerned, you may sleep in peace, my dear. Run along now and go to bed, dear—go to bed."

His voice had the gentleness of despair, and he sighed as he turned from her. She touched him timidly on the arm.

"Jim, say that you forgive me."

"I forgive you, dear, of course. In return, do you believe in *me?*"

"Yes," said her unsteady lips. But in her eyes, his could read plainly the doubt that is the tragic child of knowledge. And she in the tones of his forgiveness could feel how far her very need of it had lowered her from the serene preeminence which his love had always accorded her.

"She hasn't lived up to her name, your thoroughbred, has she?" she observed in a trembling voice. "Good night, Jim!"

"Good night, dear," he said.

She left him standing by the fireplace, still staring at the pallid heap of ashes.

CHAPTER XIII.

Like a plastic image, Ellen stood in her room while Armandine undressed her. The very process of going to bed seemed farcical. It appeared to her that she would never sleep again.

Suddenly the door-bell thrilled.

Ellen started and panted. Who could it be, that came so late? Her attention, high-keyed in its fear of of-

ficers of the law, was instantly alert through her overwearied frame.

As Armandine went off to answer the bell, her mistress followed her as far as the door of her room. With her negligée wrapped about her, and her comb thrust half-way through the loosened hair, Ellen listened at the half-open door. In a faint reaction of her straining consciousness, she told herself that now she was properly punished for her heartlessness in pursuing these ordinary cares of the toilet, at the time of such extremity which she herself had wrought. If Mr. Durham, urged not only by self-preservation but by jealous rage, had already acted—if the warrant for Jim's arrest had been sworn out, and police had come for him, how could she disgrace him by showing herself in her present state of undress, to say good-by?

The thought, though outwardly trivial, was one of sharp agony. She listened to Armandine's steps going down the hall, to the murmur of voices at the door, to the brisk steps of the little Frenchwoman as she returned to the drawing-room. Evidently, it was Jim who was sought. Her fear leaped to a frantic certainty. He was lost, and it was she who had betrayed him. For the first time, it seemed to her that she realized the full baseness of her conduct of the afternoon.

In a little furious impulse of the fear which, as a little girl, had driven her always from the sight of "anything horrid happening," she shut her door and flung herself face downward on her bed. Panic fear was on her; panic remorse and panic shame. Jim was a prisoner, Jim was a criminal. Guilty or innocent, the actual ruin was all the same. And it was her doing. To this extremity her love had brought him.

Self-contempt shook her from head to foot like an ague. Her love! What was it after all, her love that she had given in so glad a pride, and which had called down on her beloved a disaster worse than death? Love! Was it love after all that she had given?

"Ellen!" called her husband's voice.

The tones were stern and high. They came through the closed doors like the call of a muffled bugle. Ellen, weakened by her long and distressing vigil, huddled closer between her pillows, and buried her face like a child.

"Ellen, come here!" called her husband's voice again.

This time she rose to her feet and walked stiffly to the door. Her hand shook as she opened it, but all her self-consciousness was gone. Her straight yellow hair fell about her like a glistening sheet, as with her comb still in her hand she walked slowly toward the drawing-room.

The chill of the room struck against her bare shoulders as she entered. But she saw nothing but her husband, standing alone in the middle of the floor. At any rate, he was alone. What she had feared was not yet. In a shock of relief that drove every other thought from her mind, she sprang toward him.

"Jim! I was so frightened!" she cried out like a child. Then as she perceived a letter in his hand: "What is it? Anything—anything about——" Her voice faltered, and the comb dropped from the unsteady fingers that she extended toward her husband.

For answer he thrust into her hand a long manila envelope, directed to him in an immense black handwriting, and torn open on one side.

"You may look," he said.

Her eyes were still fixed on his as she drew the folded paper from within. Then she looked down. In her hand she held a number of official-looking documents, some pale blue, others white. They fluttered about her to the floor, as with her shaking hand she opened the first at random. The words stared up at her in a familiar hand.

Place proceeds to account of B. K. Henderson. (Signed) J. M. P.

"Jim!" she cried. "It's the Henderson notes!"

The blood sang through her brain. She stared up as a condemned criminal raises his eyes from the document which reprieves him from immediate death.

Palliser nodded. "And the Achaguas

vouchers, too—the whole business is there in your hands." His face, though composed, wore the same look of weariness as when she had seen it last. The joy that had moved his wife so immensely seemed not to have touched him at all. "You see, Mrs. Durham changed her mind, after all."

After the ugly reality of her recent terror, even the pain evoked by the other woman's name on Jim's lips passed high over her head. After what she had known of the certainty of arrest, after what she had mistaken for its immediate fulfilment, the rending pangs of jealousy seemed small indeed. Her thought was no longer for herself, but for her husband.

"I'm so glad! I'm so glad!" she whispered passionately.

Palliser's face did not change. He held out to her another open envelope which still remained in his hand—a delicate little envelope, crested and sealed in violet. As he turned it over, he displayed his own name, written in the same great handwriting as on the envelope of documents.

"Ellen, I am resolved to have no more secrets from you in this affair. If you choose, you shall read this letter," he said briefly.

She recoiled. For the first time, she realized how she had sunk in his opinion. "Read another woman's letter? No, Jim," she returned proudly. Then she added in sudden timidity: "How did she manage to send you the papers, dear?"

"Through her maid, and a special-messenger, and a trifle of ingenuity," he returned grimly. "It seems, there have been some fearful times up there—the old man is nearly out of his head, she says; talks about divorce, about shooting me, about shooting her, every one in fact but himself. However, she managed to hide the papers, and get them off to me." He turned, and began again his restless march up and down the little room. "Ellen, it's for you to decide. Shall I accept them?"

"My dearest Jim!" She turned to him in an irrepressible outburst of gratitude that seemed to warm her chilled and wearied body in a flush of vital heat. "My dearest, do you really think me so wicked? I'll go to her tomorrow and thank her myself on my knees, if she will let me—if she won't, I'll thank her in my heart all the rest of the days of my life."

Palliser stopped before her. "You refuse to read her letter, Ellen," he said, "and I respect you, of course, for your refusal. But I am bound to admit, the contents would pain you. They have pained me. You told me what Violet told you this afternoon, concerning her present feelings for me. I denied it because I had no reason to believe it true. This letter—proves that she told you the truth."

His voice went low in obvious embarrassment and distress. Then he forced his eyes to meet his wife's, from which their glow of joy had faded.

"It is universally acknowledged, I believe," he went on firmly, "that a man who betrays the woman who honors him with such a confidence, makes himself worthy of the name of cad. But in this case, Ellen, as you have already been made to suffer so much in this affair, I think it is only your right that I should inform you openly; it is not in the spirit that I had believed, that Violet offers me this service. I sought her as a friend. I believed she served me as a friend. Now, to my deep regret, I find that the five years have not made in her the complete change they have made in me. She offers me these papers, Ellen, as the man who by seeking her aid openly avowed himself as her admirer, and who now in accepting it——" He broke off abruptly. "Ellen," he added, "do you still authorize me to accept these papers?"

Ellen glanced sharply around. It still seemed to her that she saw the eyes and badges of policemen glaring at her from behind every curtain. Before the sickening reality of her recent shock, her own emotional tortures had faded into the dim regions of imaginary things. Jim was now the object of primary importance, not as the man she loved, but as a man in the world of men. Jim, the light-hearted Don Juan, where

was the essential horror of that idea? But James Palliser, the justly convicted malefactor!

She stooped to the floor, and hurriedly snatched together the scattered papers. "*Do* I authorize you to accept them, Jim?" she said, with a little choked laugh. Then with the same hurried movements, she ran to the wood-box and took out a handful of excelsior and kindling.

"What are you doing, Nelly?"

"Just rekindling the fire. The radiator is cold, as usual. And I'm chilly, in this little lace rag!"

He pushed her aside. "Of course. Let me do it for you, dear!"

She watched him warily, as the bright blaze leaped upon the hearth. As he stood back, she leaned down with a quick movement which his quicker word arrested. "What are you doing now, Nelly?"

"Just burning up these horrid papers," she answered smoothly. "You don't object, do you, dear?"

With a light hand on her shoulder, he pushed her back into her chair. "I do object. This fire is to warm your poor little feet. Now, if you will give me back those papers, dear!"

She put her hands behind her in a kind of desperate playfulness. "But I like to hold them, dearest! It gives me a sense of certainty, of safety. But their ashes would be more satisfactory yet. Why won't you give me their ashes?"

"Because I haven't decided yet, Ellen."

In spite of the newly glowing warmth she shivered. The gravity of his tone carried their conversation back to something of its recent distress.

"You haven't decided what, Jim?"

"Whether I, as a man of honor, can accept this great service from a woman who—who may expect such thanks as I cannot give her."

The certainty afforded by these words, which a short time ago would have given their hearer so blessed a relief, was now as nothing beside the vague terrors that they inspired.

"Nonsense!" she answered sharply. "It's all very well to talk of honor, but this is a case of jail. And what alternative would you propose? To send the papers back again?"

She spoke in fierce irony, but the reply was gravely serious: "That is, as you say, one possible alternative, my dear."

Something in the face bent down toward hers caught her suddenly about her heart. She made a swift gesture toward the fire. He caught her hand and the docket of papers in it.

"No!" he said.

She felt the firmness of his muscular grip upon her fingers, the strength of his will in his voice. She raised her eyes to his in a sudden timidity. For the first time she realized that this man to whom in these last few days she had given her pity and her protection, her jealous suspicion and her pardon; whom even in her deepest love she had never ceased to patronize as a being weaker than herself—for the first time she realized that he was stronger than she. In becoming his own master he had become hers as well.

But over the deep thrill of triumph born of this new realization was laid a strangling fear. No less than before, her task was to save him from himself; but now by the arts and pleadings of the one confessedly the weaker, luring the stronger from the path which both knew equally to be the best. From his guiding and sustaining angel, she had now become the wife of every-day commonplace, whose love urges her husband toward the safety of the expedient, rather than the perils of the honorable way.

"Dear, are you crazy?" she cried. "Are you giving up the fight now that we have won it? Are you pushing us back again into that horrible black hole of distress, where we were hanging a half-hour ago? It was like death! I couldn't bear it again. I couldn't! To hear you speak of—of putting an end to yourself, or to think of you dragged away from your home, away from me! What do I care what thanks Mrs. Durham expects of you? She can have them! She can have them! And my thanks, too, Jim! My darling, my beloved husband, I kneel to you. Let me

burn these papers! Let me burn these papers!"

She slid to his feet, a little desolate heap of falling laces and loosened shining hair. Her weariness, her distress, had taken from her the dignity of which they both had always been so proud. In the fury of her pleading, she was no more than a mere fleshly embodiment of the desire which filled her. Like the hysterical and passion-torn woman of the afternoon, she had cast away every other consideration in life beside that which to her for the moment represented life itself.

"Give me the papers, Ellen."

"To send back to Mrs. Durham? No!"

Her fingers closed on the bulging envelope with a grip like that of the drowning. And over the whole, her husband's hand still lay in a firm restraint.

"I didn't say, I was intending to send them back to Mrs. Durham, Nelly."

"Thank God!" She fell sideways against her chair, her extended arm pulling against the hand which so firmly clasped her own. Beneath the glowing immensity of her relief, she felt a faint subconscious shock of disappointment; of that thrill of contempt which the weaker must feel when it sees the stronger yield to its wiles.

Then she looked up at him with a little smile. Her cause was not yet wholly won.

"If I give you the papers, you'll promise to destroy them, yourself, darling?"

"I promise nothing. Loosen your fingers, Nelly."

She tried to laugh. "Indeed I won't, till you promise. Oh! You're pulling my hair." He desisted his efforts. She grew urgent. "Promise, Jim! They mustn't be left lying about like stray dynamite, you know! For after all we have to face the fact—forgive me if I hurt you, dearest."

She stopped short. Her thought leaped to her eyes like a cry of pain made visible. Her husband stooped to her.

"I understand you, Nelly. You mean, we have to face the fact that I am guilty."

"Jim!" she whispered painfully, "I didn't say that—I didn't even think it!"

"But it thought itself. The thought is there now. Can you deny it, Nelly?"

"Yes," she answered, but her ready tones carried no conviction with them.

"We both know better," he answered.

Then, drawing a long breath, he looked off across the room. Ellen glanced up at his tall figure. He was safe, yes; and her love was safe. No more phantoms of the police with warrants, no more clutching specters of jealousy. But the inward reality! The secret basic fact, which in this world of wiles and of weakness each human being can at need lock up even from the one beloved! She believed that circumstances wronged him, that he was innocent of the crime that every fact laid upon him. She believed, in the face of evidence. But how, after the shock which her faith had received this afternoon, could she ever *know?*

She remained looking up at him miserably. The safety for which she had so earnestly labored, so fiercely pleaded, seemed to her at the moment a thin and unsatisfactory thing indeed.

Jim turned back and leaned down toward her, still clasping her hand in his. The glow of the rising fire, leaping on his face, had given it a new look of radiance. She stared at him. Was it only the brightness of the firelight that shone from his eyes?

"Ellen!" he said in a voice as new as the look in his face. "Ellen! I told you just now I was not intending to send these papers back to Mrs. Durham. But I did not say I had no intention of returning them to——"

He stopped, hesitated. Ellen completed his sentence.

"To whom, then?"

"To Mr. Durham, Nelly."

There was a pause. Before the immediacy of the horror thus threatened the revulsion of Ellen's mental forces was sharp and complete.

The fire, her friend and ally, burned near. With a catlike gathering of her

forces, she crouched and sprang. Her hand jerked itself from her husband's clasp. The envelope flew from it, straight into the hottest part of the fire.

"What!" cried Palliser.

With a gesture as quick as her own, he stooped. From between the glowing logs his hand snatched the blackened envelope. He straightened himself again, and Ellen stared up at him from the floor.

"It's a lucky thing for us both," he observed quietly, "that this fire was allowed to go out in the early evening. If there had been any body of hot coals beneath this new blaze it would have been all day with me, my dear!"

"I think it's all day with you now," she cried furiously. "Are you insane, Jim?"

"No," he answered quietly, as he stowed the damaged envelope in his pocket, and stood nursing his burned hand. "I think I am sane, Nelly, for the first time since this business began!"

For the first time she realized the meaning of that changed expression on his face; realized it not in rebellion but in a kind of glow that rose to meet it. "Jim! You mean——"

"Don't you know what I mean, Ellen?" he asked steadily. "Though, upon my soul, when I first took this way out of the mess I'd been forced into, it seemed natural enough. To go to an old friend who could give me the help I needed—why not? I had to ask her, to be sure, to act against her own husband; but in spite of her crazy ways, Violet was always fair and square. It didn't seem too out-of-the-way to ask her to checkmate a game like that. Though when I began to see the need of secrecy, even from you, I'll own it went against the grain. The first time I met her, you see, was quite openly, down at the Waldorf. Then one thing and another, I found myself in up to my neck. Then at last, this letter——"

He flung out his hand in a gesture of desperation. The burned palm, striking against the desk by which he stood, caused him to wince with a sudden exclamation of pain.

"Your poor hand!" cried Ellen pitifully. "You have burned yourself!" And she remembered her own burned wrist of two nights before.

"I've burned more than myself, Nelly," he answered slowly. "What have I done to Violet? What have I done to you? When my trouble came, instead of meeting it like a man, I ran to take shelter behind women's petticoats. And what has been the result for them both? For one of them misery, scandal—who knows? Perhaps the divorce court. For the other—for you, Nelly, who stuck by me in my troubles like the thoroughbred you are—how shall I measure the trouble and the humiliation that I have made for you? Oh, a pretty specimen I have given you for a husband," he cried, as his voice shook in a flash of his old ardent anger, "but I'll show you now, if it's not too late, that I'm a man after all! You say you believe in my innocence of this embezzling charge that hangs over me, but how can you *know?* Very well then, I'll make you know! I'll prove my innocence to you, the woman I love, even though by that very act I make myself guilty before all the world. Do you understand now, Ellen, why I am sending these papers back to Durham?"

The blood rushed to Ellen's face, the light into her eyes. She saw her husband standing before her as though glorified by his resolution; a martyr, a witness for the truth. Then came the recollection of the fate into which he was rushing, a thought horrifying like a glimpse of the stake.

"Jim, forgive me that I ever doubted you. I believed all along, in my heart, that you were innocent. I know it now—I know! Thank God, there's no room for any doubt any more! And now, let me burn the papers!"

As she ran to him, he turned with a little smile. He had just finished addressing the long envelope which he had taken from the desk, and into which he had sealed the unharmed Achaguas receipts. His movements were slow, for his burned hand moved stiffly. As he flung down the pen he turned with a smile to the waiting, palpitating Ellen.

"My dearest, are you trying to call my bluff? Remember, if I backed out now, you could never be certain it was more than that. And besides"—his voice turned to a sudden dignified seriousness—"I am not taking this step to win your respect alone, Ellen. It is very dear to me, but there is one thing dearer yet—my own self-respect. I may be wrong, but I feel that I can never win it back till I have washed my hands clean of this intrigue by returning these papers to the man from whom they were stolen. That he is a swindler matters nothing. I decline to abase myself to his level. I throw away every advantage gained in such a way as this. I wish I could as easily throw off my responsibility for the wreck and misery I have caused, or that I could cure what remains. But at least, I can decline to profit by it. I can try, at least, to lift myself up to the level of your devotion. If the courts choose to send me to jail on such evidence as this, then to jail I go. But I stand on my innocence. Great Heavens, Ellen," he cried, turning to his wife in the sudden exaltation of his fearless impulse, "what have I got to be afraid of, whether the luck goes against me or not? I'm an innocent man, do you understand that? I am innocent!"

A moment later Palliser, turning, touched with a tender hand the streaming yellow hair that his wife lifted from his shoulder. "And now, darling," he asked gently, "before you go to bed, will you have the goodness to tell Armandine to ring for a messenger? This packet must be delivered at the Patroons the instant that the offices open in the morning."

CHAPTER XIV.

The situation to which Jim and Ellen Palliser woke the next morning was the unchanged and fatal difficulty of a week ago; made, however, more insoluble by the fact that the pursuer, who formerly had been driven only by fear, was now moved by resentment as well; resentment moreover for the deepest injury which a man can receive, or think he has received from another. A week ago they had been threatened by the instinct of self-preservation; now they were pursued by revenge as well. And the peril that lay before them was always and sickeningly the same.

But in the intoxication of their recovered confidence in each other, they laughed and joked over their breakfast-table like two children playing over a kindled mine. As Jim observed, crime took on a new and picturesque interest when viewed from the under side.

"Though it's too bad," he observed, "that I'm to be hauled up for such a commonplace, every-day affair. A defaulting cashier, even of the Patroons—why, it will hardly get us a front place in the front page of any self-respecting daily. Especially in times like these!" And he held up the morning paper, whose head-lines proclaimed financial calamity of many phases and sorts. "Look at that," he said with a smile, though his lips twitched and he set his coffee-cup down untasted. "If I'd been allowed my own choice of crime, like the rest of these fellows, there'd have been some dash to it, I can tell you that! Something to get me spread-head-lines in the most respectable evening papers—dynamite, or hypnotism, or blood! Well, cheer up, little girl," he interrupted himself as he jumped to his feet. "After all, it may not come to-day. And in any case, I go down to face my job."

In emulation of his gay courage, Ellen smiled at him; though her heart was the heart of a woman who sees her beloved go out to battle, with small odds of a safe return.

"You'll see—Mr. Durham?" she asked, with a slight unsteadiness in her tones.

Palliser nodded grimly. "I suppose so," he returned. "It's hardly likely he'd stay away from the office on a day like this, no matter what had happened in the way of a domestic smash." He paused, and for a moment the hard lines of his face relaxed into a real and kindly compassion. "Poor old chap," he said simply, "before he was driven to the wall he was very good to me. And Heaven knows, I never had any

idea of hitting him a blow like that in return. He worshiped that girl, Ellen. Whether he manages to hold the Patroons on its feet or not, I don't see how he'll ever get over this shock."

He went, and Ellen watched him go. She knew that the next time she saw him it might be through a grating.

The morning passed with an indescribable heaviness. There were no planning and no contriving; no suspicions and no wild ferreting for the truth. All she had to do was to wait. So she sat and waited. And at every jangle of the telephone, she winced like a wounded deserter at the ping! of an approaching bullet.

Her calls were, however, harmless enough. The last one was from Charlotte Swanwick, asking her to lunch with her at the Waldorf. Anything that promised to break the grinding monotony of this suspense was welcome to Ellen. She jumped at her friend's invitation, and set out for the hotel ahead of time.

It seemed to her as she walked down the crowded Peacock Row that people were pointing at her as the wife of the celebrated Patroons defaulter. Every glance evoked by her trim beauty fell on her like a stab. The name of the trust company itself, which by an odd coincidence was borne to her ears from the conversation of two or three excited groups, seemed to her a direct challenge of her own and her husband's honor. She almost wished for the end to come, when she might proclaim her faith and fight her opponents publicly.

And beneath outward defiance, beneath her inwardly brooding horror, a silent voice ground out its unending refrain like the gramophone at the end of a busy wire: "Where is he now? Where is he now? Where is he now?"

"Ah, Ellen! Here you are!"

Charlotte's greetings were warm, her expressions of friendship solicitous. Poor Ellen was pale, and no wonder! Well, here was their table, a nice cozy one near the corner, so they could talk. Would Ellen have a cocktail, and did she feel any draft, and would she be feeling up to the matinée, poor darling?

In the midst of the chattering, decorated throng they seated themselves and began their lunch. Charlotte, always conscientious in her efforts to entertain, was to-day almost suspiciously eager.

"What a funny old place this is! What a droll old place! What a meeting of the ends of the earth! There's Prince Z—— over there. I used to see him in Paris. And behind you, Ellen, is an English clergyman, bands and shovel-hat and all. What a lovely English voice—and how *beautifully* he drinks in his tea! What is there behind me, dear?"

"A blonde lady," returned Ellen, with a faint smile, "a lovely blonde lady, like——"

She paused abruptly, as she read the thought behind her friend's quick dark eyes. Then she continued firmly:

"Like the lady you took for me, last week, here with my husband. It was Mrs. Durham, wasn't it?"

The confusion below the hostess' artless assent showed what her thought had been. Ellen went on carefully:

"They're old friends, you see, Violet Durham and Jim. She used to be in the office, you know—Violet."

"Hm!" returned Charlotte, with some grimness. "I know, like everybody else in New York. Well—she's made up for it since, hasn't she?"

"What do you mean?" asked Ellen sharply.

"My dear!" Charlotte jumped in sudden confusion. "No, since I've put my foot in it, I'll admit frankly, that's not what I mean at all. You say your husband and she are old friends—well, possibly. But I've never heard his name coupled with hers—not once, I give you my word of honor, out of the whole crowd of them."

"The whole *what?*" asked Ellen in horror.

"My dear, how can I explain, with the ecclesiastical eye full on me? I can only observe, there *are* adorers, which are the most natural appendages in the world for a beautiful lady thirty years younger than her husband. And I haven't the slightest doubt, there's not

the least harm underneath.. Though Mr. Belden tells me——"

"Tells you what?"

"That there are odds given in the smoking-rooms of some of the clubs how long it will be before the Durham ménage goes to smash."

Ellen lifted her goblet of water, but the ice clinked against the glass. For the moment, even the ominously ticking voice in her head was still. Her thought went back to the scene of last evening—to a great, passionate relief that her husband had rejected the aid of the woman whom Charlotte discussed. Thank God for the renunciation of last night, which gave her security for the truth of her husband's denials—for the truth which she saw looking out at her from Charlotte's quick, understanding eyes! And thank God almost equally for the knowledge that Jim was innocent not only of broken faith, but of the broken heart which the other woman had so furiously flaunted before all concerned! A creature of overstrained and neurotic feelings, of morbid emotions; seeking ever in some fresh intrigue relief from the boring monotony of her married life—was that all she was, after all, the *grande amoureuse* who had laid at Jim Palliser's door the responsibility of her bruised existence? Poor Jim, who had so profoundly reproached himself that he was unable to cure the misery he had unwittingly caused! Well, what he could not cure, another might.

Ellen set down the glass with a little shiver. How sordid was the whole business which had nearly sucked her husband in—how vulgar! For the moment, she almost gave thanks for the certainty of ruin in which Jim by his own act now stood. From what deeper certainty of ruin had he perhaps not escaped, by flinging from him an indebtedness so unseemly? But beneath the thought the little voice ticked on: "Where is he now? Where is he now?"

"My poor dear girl'" cried Charlotte, with concern. "You're as white as a sheet! I don't care, I *will* speak of it. I think it's so brave of you, coming out to lunch at a time like this——"

"A time like what?" asked Ellen sharply. The flowers and faces swam about her. What had Charlotte heard? Had Mr. Durham already——

She shut her eyes, then opened them again to meet her friend's compassionate gaze. "Though, I suppose, it won't really mean anything for your husband but losing his position, will it? Though Mr. Belden, when he called me up to tell me of it, told me he was sure——"

"Mr. Belden told you of it?" asked Ellen in a low tone.

She clutched the edge of the white-damasked table for support. She had known the blow would be fearful when it fell, but she had hardly realized the picture of their friends chattering comfortably on the subject of Jim's misfortune. And Belden, the confidential friend and lawyer—even if Mr. Durham, whipped on by the scene of yesterday, had already published his exposure of his rival, how dared Belden follow up the miserable work by prompt and eager scandalmongering? And was Jim taken now?

"How much did Mr. Belden tell you?" she asked painfully.

Charlotte sighed in a genuine concern.

"Only what everybody knows," she returned.

It seemed to Ellen that she must scream aloud. *Only what everybody knew!* Who would have thought the end could have come so quickly? And had publicity been followed by immediate legal steps? Was Jim already lodged in the Tombs?

She began rubbing on her gloves. "I must go to him," she said hurriedly. "You'll excuse me, Charlotte, won't you? I must go to him!"

"My poor dear," cried Charlotte tenderly, "now I wouldn't do that, if I were you. Of course it's all perfectly dreadful for you both. But what on earth could you do for your husband if you *did* go to him? Even supposing you could get within speaking distance of him, which I assure you is not very likely!"

These last words, with their vivid picture of a captive's limitations, fell with

a horrible finality upon Ellen's imagination. Until this moment she had hardly realized the practical results of arrest on a criminal charge. But to think that, as Charlotte said, she could no longer get within speaking distance of her own husband, that now their conversations must be limited by gratings and clocks and vigilant guards.

"Not within speaking distance, even if you are his wife," repeated Charlotte wisely. "I ran down there myself, you see, just as soon as I heard the news from Mr. Belden. And I give you my word, you never in your life saw such a hubbub and such a crowd! The place inside all jammed to the swing-doors, and the queue winding up and down the steps and down the Avenue. And all the motors, and hansoms, and taxicabs arriving every minute—my dear girl, you *are* ill! Here, don't faint! Now, you mustn't faint!"

"Charlotte!" gasped Ellen, pushing away the offered vinaigrette. What gruesome spectacle was this that was being made of her husband's ruin? Jim Palliser, so proud and dignified—Jim Palliser, an innocent man! She was cold all over, then hot for shame. "Charlotte! Are people brutes, or are they simply mad? Do you mean to say, they've come to *look on* at such a sight as that?"

"Look on?" returned Charlotte, with a stare. "No, you dear little goose! They've just come to draw out their money—if they can!"

"What?" gasped Ellen, panting. "I don't understand you, Charlotte! Surely, there's no reason that people should be rushing this way for their money, even if——"

"Even if the rumor *is* flying about town that the Patroons had a couple of millions of the paper of that copper firm that went smash last week, and even if—— Look here, darling, I beg your pardon, I ought to have realized that for you the Patroons is more or less of a family affair. But you mean to say you weren't prepared—do you mean to say your husband hadn't told you, the poor old Trust Company was likely to come a cropper any day?"

"A cropper?" gasped the bewildered Ellen. "Then it's only the trust company——"

"Only a raid of depositors on the trust company—just a plain, ordinary run on the bank, my dear. Though people were saying, it's the first really *smart* bank-run that ever was seen!"

"But Charlotte—then you didn't see Jim?"

"I caught a glimpse of him in the background, my dear, giving orders to about twenty porters who were staggering in with cartons of gold. Poor man, it's hard on him, as they say there's no chance of all the depositors being paid, not the ghost of a chance. However, I was one of the lucky ones—fifteen hundred dollars in yellow-backs, right here in my stocking, my dear! Well, well, but I can't get over the idea that you didn't hear the news. Where have you kept yourself all day? This town is simply buzzing with it, and as for this hotel—why, didn't you hear the name to the right and left everywhere, as you came in?"

"I did hear the word Patroons once or twice as I came in," returned Ellen mechanically. Her brain, cleared of the horror raised by her blunder, braced itself to meet the situation thus unfolded to her.

For her and for her husband, this sudden crash of the Patroons Trust Company could mean only one thing; the immediate bursting of the calamity that hung over them. The impending inquiry into the bank's affairs, the discovery of the worthless collateral and yet more worthless notes, initialed by the man who was already deep in the stock represented by the collateral—could any incompleted syllogism point more logically to its own conclusion?

For one moment, as she realized the bitterness of the cup thus presented, not dimly in the future but concrete and close at hand, Ellen almost found it in her heart to regret her husband's rash chivalry of last night. Honor was all very well. But the Tombs!

And there was nothing to be done. Nothing that she could do, any more.

She turned to put on her jacket. "If

you'll excuse me, Charlotte, I really think I'll try to get Jim on the telephone."

"Take care!" cried Charlotte warningly, but too late. Ellen, rising blindly from her chair, had collided with the tray of a waiter. The man stumbled forward in a vain effort to save his burden, but too late. Sugar-bowl, hot-water jug, and silver teapot went shooting through the air. There was a crash, a muttered explosion of "Gaul durn it!" a whirl of confusion in which the waiter besought for pardon.

"No harm done, my man, none at all," was the answer, in rich English tones, from the injured gentleman.

"How funny!" whispered Charlotte to her guest, who stood with arrested purpose, hesitating, amazed. "How funny! Did you hear the way that clergyman swore? Just like a real American!"

As though screwing her courage to put to the test some new idea newly born, Ellen turned slowly. The clergyman, a portly and sunburned individual, was busily scrubbing his coat-sleeve with a napkin supplied by the waiter. As though feeling the intensity of Ellen's gaze, he glanced upward with alert, cautious eyes.

They remained staring at each other for a half moment, while the healthy dark tint of the stranger's clean-shaven face faded slowly to a faint pearl-gray. Then with an effort of self-control which caused the veins to stand out like knotted cords on his bald forehead, the reverend gentleman picked up his cup and began to sip his tea.

With a long breath, Ellen turned back to her friend. There was a pink flush in her cheeks and her eyes glowed with a strange excitement.

"My dear Charlotte, you'll excuse me if I seem to give you the slip, won't you? It's been a lovely party, but I must—I must see Jim. You can find something to do with yourself, can't you?"

Mrs. Swanwick laughed with a sly demureness. "Oh," she said, "I can jump in a tax and go and eat lunch all over again with Mr. Belden, the poor dear. I've a notion he's waiting for me, somewhere at the down-town Martin's, this minute. So if you *really* don't mind——" She buttoned her gloves, with a longing glance toward the door which showed where her desire led her. "It's a ridiculous way for a party to break up, but if you're sure you don't mind—— Why do you look so strangely, Ellen? Why do you glance sideways, like that?"

"I don't," returned Ellen, adjusting her veil with a fiercely impatient hand.

"It's all right, dear! But do you know, I thought for an instant you had discovered a long-lost uncle, or something"—she lowered her voice to a whisper—"in our friend the lordly rector here! Isn't he lovely! One can just hear the prayers for his majesty, and smell the primroses, when one looks at him; though he *did* look rather green, after that shower of tea. Well, ta-ta, old girl. You're sure I can't give you a lift to the Patroons?"

"I must telephone first," responded Ellen. Her patience was nearly at an end.

The Englishman, having signed his check, rose to his feet.

"Ta-ta!" cried the dawdling Charlotte.

At last, she was gone. Ellen, with a smile and with outstretched hand, walked deliberately after the retreating clergyman.

"What a pleasure!" she said in her brightest tones. "Who would have thought of seeing you here, doctor?"

Then as he started, fumbled, and controlled himself to accept her hand and her greeting, she added below her breath:

"You see, I have good eyes, and a good memory, Mr. Henderson!"

CHAPTER XV.

They sat together in the Turkish-room, a group more eminently discreet than is invariably seen in that famous apartment; the tall, pretty young woman who spoke so low and with such bitter energy, and the gentleman whose grave air and clerical vestments pro-

claimed his Anglican respectability. Considering his appearance, his words were of a rather startling nature.

"Very well, then. If I admit frankly that you are right, Mrs. Palliser, will you give me your word not to hand me over to the police?"

Ellen surveyed the speaker thoughtfully. "That's what I ought to do, of course. It's my duty as a citizen to see you punished—to see that you hand back what's left of the money you carried off with you."

He made a mild gesture of deprecation in the perfect pulpit style. "But there's so little left, dear lady—so little left!"

"I have no doubt of that," returned Ellen grimly, "but what I can't make out, Mr.—ah—what I don't understand is why you came back."

"Business, business! Affairs left at loose ends with one or two of our leading capitalists—little matters that I had managed to serve them in, and could again. Then, to tell you the truth—er!—a certain lady from whom I had no news since the unfortunate matter of my drowning. That was not badly managed, was it?" He spoke with a certain pride. Then, in a sudden outburst of confidence: "But above all, dear lady, the lure! Have you ever imagined it or felt it, the lure of all this?" He spread his sleek hands wide. "I'm a New Yorker born and bred. I'd stewed in their swamps down there, and jabbered their lingo, and watched their Cheap-Jack imitation of life, till I *had* to get back to the real thing, if only for a fortnight. And my, isn't it good!" The eyes behind his gold-bowed spectacles roamed lovingly about the room. "Little old New York! Just to see it, and listen to it, and smell it once more—I *had* to! I'm damned if I ever——"

He drew a long breath, and for a moment his face showed the fear and bitterness which lurked within. "There I go again!" he said, with fierce disgust. "After all, it's all in the way a man's brought up, isn't it, Mrs. Palliser? The night I dined with you and your husband, I gave myself away. To-day again, after holding in for two weeks, gave myself away again. You've sharper eyes than the detectives, I don't deny that. But just the same, you wouldn't ever have recognized me, if that durned little word—I beg your pardon—hadn't come slipping out, would you?"

"I certainly would not," returned Ellen truthfully, with her eyes on the bland, priestly visage which confronted her.

"Good get-up, isn't it?" he remarked, with pride. "Got the idea from an old chap on the Barcelona boat, coming back from Rio. So when I got up to London I just loaded up on these clerical togs, and got a shave, and a pair of window-glass spectacles—and I've walked in and out of this place for two weeks, in the face of all the Pinkertons in town. Then just for one confounded cup of tea, that I only drank for the sake of the stage effect, just for one damned little word, that slipped out before I knew it, I gave myself away and here I am. Confound it, it's miserable luck, that's what it is, Mrs. Palliser. I was sailing this very afternoon, on the *Lusitania*."

"Mr.—ah! I beg your pardon." Ellen leaned forward with glittering eyes. "Perhaps you can sail on her after all."

"Ah—what?" The man carried his plump hand to the clean-shaven lips which, in spite of his enforced calm, trembled with the intensity of his emotion. "Now let us talk frankly, Mrs. Palliser. I'm an old friend of your husband's. Can we arrange a friendly deal?"

Ellen's head swam. She saw light ahead. If any blame or any shame attached itself to this compounding of a felony, then she would take it all upon herself. Jim should be kept out of the affair—Jim, from whom she had snatched his own defense, should now be saved at her responsibility, and by her hand. Whether or not it was right to let the criminal go free, it seemed to her better than to see the innocent suffer. Henderson, and Henderson alone, could save Jim. But he could hardly be expected to do so at a less price than his own freedom.

Her decision was taken. In a few words she related to her stately, twitching listener, the story of the Achaguas deal as she had heard it from Jim. In spite of the agony of suspense in which Henderson sat, his interest and amazement were evident.

"So it was with the bank's money the old rascal bought my stock! If I had known *that!*" he exclaimed in virtuous indignation. "So you mean to tell me that now the funds are—ahem—lost, he is intending to maintain that the deal was not his own, but Mr. Palliser's?"

Ellen trembled with delight. "So you understood clearly that Mr. Durham was the purchaser of your stock, and not my husband?"

He stared. "Mr. Palliser acted as Mr. Durham's agent in making the payments for the first purchase. He told me, Mr. Palliser was accustomed to transacting his business for him. *I* never thought anything of it!"

"But the notes?" cried Ellen. "The notes, secured by Achaguas stock—it was Mr. Durham who made you those loans, or my husband?"

"Mr. Durham, of course," returned Henderson, with a look of surprise.

"Ah!" Ellen wet her lips. Her next question was so immense, so momentous that she could hardly bear to ask it.

"But—but," she said, "you have papers of Mr. Durham's—letters, orders, signed slips and so forth, which show he was a stockholder in the Achaguas Rubber—which prove it was he, and not my husband, who lent you the half-million out of the bank's funds?"

For one moment, across the benignant face which she so feverishly scanned, flitted an expression of cunning which showed the sharper's soul beneath. "*Have I?*" he said. "You don't suppose a man in my position is going to destroy any papers with a responsible man's signature on the tail of them, do you?"

Ellen's relief was so great as to break out in open laughter. At that clear, trembling peal, one or two persons near turned in admiring sympathy. Then she spoke again in a tone low but urgent:

"You have them here with you? Here in New York?" He nodded. "Here at the hotel?"

"No—down at my old partner's office, in Wall Street."

"You can get them at once?"

His eyes beamed mild reproach and amazement. "Mrs. Palliser! For me to go there would be suicide."

"Then telephone. Tell him to send them at once, by messenger."

He shook his head. "There are difficulties. We have fears that he is shadowed. In that case, the mail would be the only safe means of communication."

"Which means," cried Ellen sharply, "we must wait till five o'clock!"

"Quiet, quiet, dear lady! Yes—five o'clock."

Ellen thought swiftly. The calamity which even at this moment was pouring thick and fast upon the unfortunate Patroons Trust; which even as she sat here was battering down its credit and its doors together, ripping open its secrets, calling its officials to account—all this afforded enough, in the way of mere outside pressure, to call down the dreaded disaster on her husband's head. But added to that were the dreadful forces working from within—the hatred of a jealous husband, the vengeful desires of a man who believed himself wounded in the dearest point of honor. And again in Ellen's brain, loud and imperative, rose up that awful insistent inner voice, not as a question but as a summons: "Where is he now? Where is he now?"

Where was Jim Palliser now, indeed? Even now as she sat here talking, who knew but——

She jumped to her feet. "Will you please come with me now—at once?"

"I am honored, Mrs. Palliser. Where?"

"To the Patroons Trust."

He shrank away. His ruddy face grew mottled. She laid her hand gently on his arm. "Pull yourself together, you will attract attention. And don't attempt to argue the point here. Wait till we are in the cab."

A few moments later, as the disguised defaulter seated himself beside her in

the taximeter, he turned toward her for the first time with the open terror that he felt.

"You told the man, the Patroons Trust, Mrs. Palliser! I can't go there, don't you understand? If, as you say, Durham is on his last legs, and has to find some one to lay the responsibility on, then don't you see that he'd take me? What's the use of keeping up the bluff, at this stage? Achaguas Rubber was just that, from the beginning—just *rubber!* I got rubbered myself, even—where the money's gone to I hardly know, but it's gone—all but a few thousands. Durham holds my notes—I have no funds to redeem them. At a time like this, when he himself is going to the wall, do you think he'll spare me? Here's the plain truth, Mrs. Palliser—I'm criminally liable for the loss of Durham's money."

"You forget one thing," returned Ellen steadily. "It was *not* Mr. Durham's money."

He glanced at her in sudden comprehension. Then, taking off his shovel-hat, he mopped his glistening forehead. "You've a head, Mrs. Palliser! What with my nervousness and trying situation, and all that, I confess the point quite escaped me. You mean, Durham himself is criminally liable, no less than me."

She nodded. "Precisely. And you are the only person in America who can prove it. Do you understand?"

He became almost blithe. "I see your point, Mrs. Palliser. You mean—Durham can't round on me, because I can round on him, the worst way. But—your husband, Mrs. Palliser? Do you think he'll be as willing as you to—er—compound the felony?"

"Do you think he'd betray the man who saved him, Mr. Henderson?" returned Ellen.

He started and glanced around. "Be careful about that name, Mrs. Palliser! And say! Look at that blockade ahead there on the Avenue! Is there a fire?"

A recollection of Charlotte's words came back to Ellen. It seemed indeed that every hansom, and taximeter, and private motor in town were packed and swaying in the portion of the Avenue which they approached. Over the tightly wedged jam rose the familiar granite arches of the trust company.

Ellen rapped on the glass to attract the notice of the chauffeur. "To the side door, on —th Street," she commanded.

Henderson caught her by the arm. For the first time, as he realized her intention, the terror of the hunted creature leaped into his face.

"Mrs. Palliser, for God's sake! Why do you drag me in there? Wait till this evening! I'll get you the papers this evening, I give you my oath!"

"This evening may be too late," she answered, "and if so, what could your papers do then but give a proof of Jim's innocence, *after* his arrest? *After* his indictment? The guilt might be disproved, but the taint would stay. No, we must save him this moment, if we are not already too late!"

"But what can I do, Mrs. Palliser? Without those letters and signed slips, what can I do to influence Durham?"

"He knows that you have them, Mr. Henderson. He thinks you are five thousand miles away, where you cannot possibly use them against him—where Jim can never lay hands on them for his defense. But when he sees you here, with me, do you suppose he will not understand?"

Ellen spoke rapidly, excitedly. The weapon which chance had slipped into her hand was one for which she had not even dared to hope. Pray Heaven, she was not too late to use it in Jim's defense!

The taximeter, halting before the side door of the Patroons, had to wait a moment for an express-cart backed up to the curb. From the curb to the door stretched a double line of policemen, and between the line hurried men in the dark-green livery of the trust company, bending under heavy cartons which they carried with anxious care.

"They're getting in gold from outside," observed Henderson. "By Jove, it *is* a run and no mistake! Is there the ghost of a chance we can see Durham?"

"Don't deceive yourself with vain hopes, Mr. Henderson," returned Ellen, with a resolution that tightened her jaws. "We are *going* to see him!"

"And if the business slips a cog somewhere?" cried the fugitive defrauder. "If I get recognized and caught, Mrs. Palliser?"

She regarded him with a stern scorn. "Then, Mr. Henderson—excuse me!—but you will be getting only what you deserve. In order to save an innocent man from bearing the burden of your crime, I am giving you this chance to buy your own freedom by securing his. For my husband's sake, I can't afford to give you away. For his own sake, Mr. Durham can even less afford to turn against you. Play your game with spirit, promise him his own letters and order-slips in return for the Achaguas receipts which bear Mr. Palliser's name, and you save not only yourself but two other people—*three* other people. Do you understand?"

"I understand," her companion admitted, swallowing hard and fingering his spotless clerical collar, "but it is a risk."

"A risk!" cried Ellen indignantly. "And you ought to be on your knees, giving me thanks that it's not a certainty!"

A few moments later, they stood together in the inner corridor of the trust company. The defaulter had pulled himself together, and stood a dignified figure, gazing on the confusion around him. Messenger-boys were ceaselessly departing and arriving. At a table near them, two bank officials were receiving and verifying the boxes of gold which the uniformed porters piled beside them. A half-dozen clerks rushed by with huge piles of ledgers. A puffing individual, whom Ellen recognized as one of the directors, strode frowning down the corridor.

Through the open doorway which led to the public offices without came the murmuring hum of the thronging depositors. It was a sound indescribably menacing and insistent. It seemed to Ellen that she was on the stage, listening to the greedy roar of an enraged mob in the auditorium. She shivered to think that Jim, in spite of the relief she was bringing to him personally, must share the anxiety and the fate of those from whom this swarming crowd sought its rights.

She felt a touch on her elbow. She turned to look into the pink face of her young acquaintance of two days ago.

"Mrs. Palliser! I tell you straight, it ain't no use," he said hurriedly. "Mr. Palliser couldn't see the Angel Gabriel if he called—I wouldn't dare interrupt him even with your name, see? Why, *look!* Ain't it awful? The old Patroons! Them cowards out there, I despise 'em!" And he shook his fist in the direction of the depositors, while the captive Henderson brightened visibly.

"The boy is right, Mrs. Palliser," he observed demurely, as he edged toward the door. "It seems a most unreasonable time to insist, and if——"

Ellen detained him with her hand. "Wait, my dear doctor!" She turned back to the boy. "It's not my husband I must speak with. It's Mr. Durham."

"Mr. Doy'm!" cried the boy in an awed whisper, as he stood aside to admit the passing of two sleek, black-haired gentlemen with little note-books and vulturelike noses. "Mr. Doy'm! Honest, are you crazy? He's been shut up with the directors, this past hour. All the big bugs in town are here today, a-jawin' wit' him, see? He's expecting —— now!" And he named a name august like that of royalty in New York finance.

For answer Ellen took her card and wrote a few words upon it.

"Will you give that to Mr. Durham, at once? He will understand it, I think. And I think, he will see us."

The boy hesitated. "I hardly know as I das. He come down to the office lookin' like death this mornin', even before them fools out there begun. Well, he swore at me this morning—he can't do woyse than eat me, now!" And doubtfully, he departed.

Ellen, with the reluctant Henderson beside her, pushed up through the thronging corridor until they stood be-

side the closed door of the president's room.

Here they stopped. The strained, preoccupied faces that hurried past them took no notice of their presence. Ellen's eyes, fiercely compelling, were on the man whom she held beside her by the mere force of her will. As for Henderson, he stood with his face close-pressed to a framed engraving which he examined with a great air of near-sighted interest. But beneath his tanned and shaven cheek the pulse beat like a hammer. From the outer offices, the voice of the crowd beat back with an inarticulate roar like that of a sea-beach. From the occasional glimpse that Ellen caught it was plain that the depositors were still being paid off.

She caught a word tossed from one tense-faced man to another, as a pair of clerks hurried past her. "*Something's* got to break!" said the one, and the other nodded. "Thank God, it's ten minutes of closing-time!" he said.

Ellen shivered. The old Patroons Trust, whose granite arches had been for New York the very symbol of the city's financial stability—was it possible that company was going to break? In the voices, the footsteps, the hard-set faces that stirred and flashed about her, she beheld the outward symbol of a destruction impalpable yet vital. All about her was quivering and shattering the airy fabric which forms the foundation of the solid business world—the confidence of each man in the other's ability to pay. In the faces about her, confidence had changed to fear—a fear which before to-morrow must have infected the whole country with panic. In witnessing this attack upon the most famous trust company in America, it seemed to her that she stood in the very heart of the whirlwind, in the very center of the financial storm which must bring disaster, or reflected disaster, to the whole world.

The door beside her opened. Two gentlemen emerged, one stately, the other sharp-set, but both marked with the same look of grave anxiety.

"I'll telephone you before five o'clock, Durham," said the first.

Mr. Durham, leaning heavily on the bronze door-knob, made an inaudible reply. Even before he beheld her and her companion, Ellen was shocked by the aspect of his face. His lips and hollow eyes wore the same look as that which, for one dreadful moment yesterday, she had seen darkening them; but now more painful because, though less keenly edged, that look of pain had now been printed there by pitiless conviction and by a sleepless night. Should she put out her hand to add to so plain a suffering?

For one moment she hesitated, then she gripped her resolution. It was to save Jim. And the man before her, however great his private misfortunes, had nothing to fear from her as an honest man, but as the thief of trust-money and of friendly faith.

Her young friend darted forward, but she forestalled him. As the two directors, with a hasty nod, hurried away, she stepped forward.

"Mr. Durham, can you spare me a moment?" she said boldly.

He turned his weary eyes upon her as though hardly conscious of her presence. "No time now, no time now," he said testily. Then, raising his glance over her shoulder: "Come in, Lewisohn, come right in."

"I think you had better see me," said Ellen determinedly. Then, stepping forward, she spoke into his ear.

"Mr. Henderson is here," she said.

The financier flashed upon her a look which, even in his present battered and desperate condition, held something of the majesty of one accustomed to rule. "Nonsense!" he said. "This is no time, Mrs. Palliser, for worrying me about your little affair."

The waiting clerks and officials crowded up from behind Ellen. Her moment was slipping by. Raising her voice, she spoke smilingly across the corridor.

"Will you come here, doctor, if you please?" she said.

With slow steps, hesitating yet dignified with the stateliness of mortal necessity, the august figure of the defaulter pushed through the throng. In the

faces of those about was plainly shown their disgust at this intrusion of woman and of priest, at this time of keen-drawn crisis in the affairs of men.

"Here, Mr. Durham, is the gentleman you wanted to see," she said smoothly.

Mr. Durham retreated into his room. His eyes were fixed on those of the nervously smiling Henderson. The change that came over the banker's face was like that which occurs at the moment of death; from the mobility of suffering into a final fixity. That he recognized the man before him, and realized the significance of his return, there could be no doubt.

The subordinates, seeing only that the intruders were to take place of them, had hurried away. The two men, whose association had begun in such bright if unlawful hopes, stood staring at each other over the ruin which now confronted each in the person of the other. Mr. Durham spoke first.

"Glad to see you," he said thickly. "No notion you were in town. Just a moment. I'm very tired. Just wait a moment."

He swung the heavy door to with a crash.

"What's he going to do now?" asked Henderson, with white lips. "Telephone for the police?"

"He won't dare," replied Ellen, with outward confidence, though vague doubts smote her heart. "As he says, he is very tired. No wonder he wants a moment to pull himself together, for an interview like——"

She stopped short. From behind the door of the president's room, right at her elbow as it seemed, came suddenly a sharp and unreverberating report.

The sound, so unexpected, so full of a deadly significance, arrested the tide of life in the corridor like a drop-curtain suddenly let down over the stage. For one moment voices and steps were suspended together. The whole busy crowd forgot their surging anxieties of life, before this sound that spoke of death. From the outer offices, the hum of the swarming visitors swelled up as the roar of a passing mob swells through the open door of a church.

Mr. Miller, the chief accountant, an acquaintance of Ellen's, jumped forward and seized her arm as she stood by the door.

"It came from in there!" he whispered. She nodded, and he tried the door.

It yielded immediately, and the man entered. Pushed by the curious and horror-smitten crowd behind her, Ellen was forced into the room. Almost against her will, she was borne up past the mahogany roll-top desk: where, among a great litter of papers and of bronze desk-fittings, William Durham's gray head had fallen forward. It lay motionless upon the red-stained blotter, and beside it lay his hand still clasping the revolver.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the little private room which bore on its door the legend "Mr. Palliser," Ellen lay weakly back in a large leather-covered chair. Beside her on the table sat a small glass of brandy which the office-boy, eager to requite past kindness, had run to fetch her from a neighboring hotel. For even her nerves which she strove to make so steady had come near to collapsing at the horror of the recent sight.

The door was partly open, but from behind it came no sound. The roar of thronging voices and of scurrying footsteps had ceased with a sudden silence, as when the wind falls upon the sea. The bank was closed, but the stillness was more than that. She shivered, for she knew it to be the silence of death.

What that death meant, for her and for one she loved better than herself, she had as yet hardly realized. She lifted her hand to her breast, then dropped it again. Poor old Mr. Durham! Not only to himself, but to all that his life had touched, its sudden taking-off must come only as a relief—to the wife whom he adored, and who now would see herself free from a bond she had loathed to the point of open rebellion; to the friend on whom he had placed the bur-

den of his own peculations; to the friend's wife who had doubted her own power, even with the reenforcements which chance had bestowed upon her, to force from him the admission of his fraud. And to the person who represented these reenforcements!

In spite of herself, Ellen's pale lips contracted in a twitching smile. She did not need to be told—she could guess the relief with which Henderson, taking advantage of the horror-smitten confusion, had melted into the crowd and disappeared.

Was it her duty to see to it that he was pursued and brought back—he who had defrauded not only the bank and its depositors, but a thousand hard-working investors unknown to her?

She had not claimed his fulfilment of his part of their agreement because she had not needed to claim it. Yet she felt that her own word bound her. After all, where was the practical use of giving up a man who claimed, with every probability of truth, to have lost practically all of his own nefarious gains? He could never restore the lost funds to the company. There could be small good, as a result of a step doubtfully right. For, after all, the defaulter, though he had not fulfilled the letter of his bond, had fulfilled it in spirit by securing beyond question the safety of the man she loved.

By rising like a phantom of retribution before the guilty Durham, Henderson had wrought out the just apportionment of good and evil in a way more wonderful than she could have foreseen, more conclusive than she could have dared to hope. If not by his hand at least by his agency, Jim Palliser was free forever from the foul and baseless charge which for this past week had hung over him. Again she raised her hand to her bosom, with a little quivering smile. Then she started. The door swung softly open, and her husband entered the room.

His face was changed since the morning. The recent shock, as well as the grinding anxieties of the morning, had left its mark upon it. He came in wearily, and bent over his wife.

Neither of them spoke. He laid his hand gently upon her shoulder; and with a little caressing gesture she rested her cheek upon it.

"Poor old Durham!" said Palliser at last. "Poor old Durham."

"Yes," she said, with a faint shudder of recollection, and again there was silence.

Palliser flung himself into a chair.

"I'm about dead beat," he said heavily. "There are a thousand things waiting out there for me, but I'll sit down just a moment. It's been a hard day, Nelly. A hard day for us all."

He sighed. For the credit of the institution he served was dear to him like his own; and the scenes of the day had been for him a strain less severe only than his own personal danger. Though for the trust company he could see hope ahead, while for himself——

With scorn of his own egotism at such a moment, he pushed the thought of self from his mind.

"A hard day," he repeated again, with a droop in his strong voice, "for us all. But for Durham, it came on top of a day that was harder yet. You see, his life was made up of two fixed ideas; his wife, and this trust company. When he thought he had lost them both, and then came all of a sudden on that revolver—my revolver that I had left in the table-drawer——" He drew his muscles together in a visible clutch at his self-control. "You see, I've been there myself, Nelly," he said in his deepest voice. "I know the look that that little instrument takes on for a man, when he has made up his mind that life is not worth living any more. And for poor old Durham, you see, it was just twice as bad as it was for me."

Ellen nodded. Then she took in her breath to tell him of Durham's encounter with the strangely resurrected defaulter—but, after all, why waste time or strength on the story at such a moment? Barring its natural interest, the revelation could matter little now; and there were other matters more pressing.

"So he just decided it wasn't worth while to go on living," went on Palliser, in a voice still touched with the awe

of the death-presence, "and the tragedy is, he was quite right. For the fact remains, the best service he could do the two idols to which his life was devoted, was to rid them of it. Violet was ready to leave him, any day. It wasn't a question of me, as she said—it was pure boredom, an insanity of boredom. And as for the Patroons—well, Nelly, by this act he has given the directors the scapegoat that he had thought to make of me. He has given the directors the scapegoat that they must have, to save the institution. For the Achaguas losses, as well as the mismanagement that has led to this crash of to-day—the blame for all this must rest on the late president.

"The bulk of the capital remains unimpaired. So by subscribing new loans, and reorganizing the company from top to bottom, there can be little doubt that the directors can put the Patroons Trust on its feet again. I don't mind owning, from something the chairman said to me just now, I'd have a good chance at the presidency myself—if I didn't have a better chance of something very different."

He flung himself heavily into a chair.

Ellen glanced up, suddenly bright-eyed. "If what?" she asked.

"I'm an egoist, Nelly, I know, to think of myself at a time like this, with death and destruction crashing all about me. It's not that I regret having sent back these papers—under the same circumstances, I'd do the same thing again. But the uncertainty, Nelly! His lawyers are in there with his papers now. The notes and vouchers, signed with my name, will be opened and placed on file. And to-morrow——"

He paused, drew a deep breath, and went on:

"To-morrow, Nelly, we have decided to keep our doors closed for the day. The directors will hold a special meeting, and it is likely that the examiners will be here. The accounts will be inspected figure by figure, the balance verified. The half-million shortage will be found. In the absence of evidence against any one else, the president would be held responsible; his suicide at such a time would be accepted for what it is, an open confession of guilt. 'Patroons' President kills himself. Shortage in Funds discovered. Loans of half-million of Bank's money to Wildcat Company he held stock in.' Can't you see the head-lines, to-morrow?

"But before to-morrow, Nelly, they'll find those papers that put the whole burden of the transaction on me. The only question is, *when?*" He looked at his wife and tried to smile. "The old Patroons is going to weather this gale, Nelly," he said. "It's a bad blow, but by taking in sail and going it slow she can weather it. Yes, the ship will sail on, all right—but Palliser will be dropped overboard. The only question, as I say, is *when?*" And with hands that shook slightly he lit a cigarette.

"Give me one, Jim!" said Ellen suddenly. With a look of some surprise, he handed her his case. "No, not a cigarette, Jim—a match!"

With the gesture that formerly had ended ineffectually, Ellen's hands flew to her blouse. From the folds beneath the pleated lace ruffles she slowly drew an envelope—a long white envelope, addressed in Jim's handwriting, and flecked in one corner with a tiny spot of red.

"What?" cried her husband, hardly daring to believe his eyes. "*What?*"

She nodded. "I was pushed into Mr. Durham's room," she said. "I saw this lying on the table, beside—— At any rate, no one was looking at me. I took my chance. I thought I had the right. For they belong to *you*, Jim! Have I your permission to open this envelope?"

He did not answer, but continued to stare like a man dazed. She took his silence for assent. Carefully avoiding the touch of the ink stain on the outer corner, Ellen tore open the envelope and drew out the familiar papers.

"They are all here," she said, counting them. "And now, Jim——"

Their eyes met. "Ellen," said her husband hoarsely. "Ellen——"

"Time enough for all that, Jim!" she said in fierce impatience. "But now, now——"

With a long rending scratch she lit her match. The tiny yellow flame flared up pallidly in the afternoon sun.

"Last night, Jim, you refused me your permission to do this. I honored you for your refusal. But to-day I have earned the right. Jim, if you still object, stop me!" She touched her match to the stained corner of the envelope. "One—two—three!"

Still Palliser sat motionless. Ellen jumped to her feet. The crawling flame licked the white paper and blue together. She stood like a priestess, holding out her blazing torch. The filmy black fragments fluttered slowly to the carpet.

"Take care!" cried Palliser sharply. "You'll burn your hand!"

She smiled at him as with an adroit movement she flung the remaining corner upon the ash-tray beside her. The paper continued slowly to burn, till the last flame died in a flickering spark. The wind, drawing lightly through the window, blew the charred fragments off into impalpable ash.

Palliser surveyed her in a heat of admiration. "You thoroughbred!" he said. "Even there in the presence of death, you could remember me and my necessity?"

She went to him. "Don't you know, Jim," she said, with passion, "what it is that is said to be stronger than death?"

He took her hands. "I know now, dearest," he said. "I think I know now, myself!"

THE END.

LIGHT O' LOVE

LITTLE Light o' Love,
Can you not be true?
Every face and flower
Entrances you;
Every star you grasp,
Every joy you clasp;
Little Light o' Love,
Can you not be true?

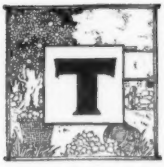
Little Light o' Love,
Say, what will you do
When Father Time's white-wing
Sweeps over you?
Will you laugh or sigh?
Will you fear or fly?
Little Light o' Love,
Say, what will you do?

Little Light o' Love,
Will you come to me,
Still your dancing feet,
Leave your revelry?
Wander then no more,
Rest beside my door.
Little Light o' Love,
Will you come to me?

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.

The HEART AT TWENTY

By WILLIAM J. LOCKE



THE girl stood at the end of the little stone jetty, her hair and the ends of her cheap fur boa and her skirts all fluttering behind her in the stiff northeast gale. Why any one should choose to stand on a jetty on a raw December afternoon with the wind in one's teeth was a sufficient problem for a comfort-loving elderly man like myself, and I pondered over it as I descended the slope leading from the village to the sea. It was nothing, thought I, but youth's animal delight in physical things. A few steps brought me in view of her face in half-profile, and I saw that she did not notice wind or spray, but was staring out to sea with an intolerable wistfulness. A quick turn in the path made me lose the profile. I cursed the road that ran along the shore, and walked rapidly along the jetty. Arriving within hailing distance I called her.

"Viviette!"

She pivoted round like a weathercock in a gust, and with a sharp cry leaped forward to meet me. Her face was aflame with a great hope and joy. I have seen to my gladness that expression once before worn by a woman. As soon as she recognized me, however, the joy vanished, killed outright.

"Oh, it's you," she said, with a quivering lip.

"I am sorry, my dear," said I, taking her hand. "I can't help it. I wish from my heart I were somebody else."

She burst into tears. I put my arm around her and drew her to me, and patted her, and said "There, there!" in the blundering masculine way. Having helped to bring her into the world twenty years before, I could claim fatherly privileges.

"Oh, doctor," she sobbed, dabbing her pretty young eyes with a handkerchief, "do forgive me. Of course I am glad to see you. It was the shock. I thought you were a ghost. No one ever comes to Ravetot."

"Never?" I asked mildly.

The tears flowed afresh. I leaned against the parapet of the jetty for comfort's sake, and looked around me. Ravetot-sur-Mer was not the place to attract visitors in December. A shingle beach with a few fishing-boats hauled out of reach of the surf; a miniature casino, like an impudently large summer-house, shuttered-up, weather-beaten, and desolate; a weather-beaten, desolate, and shuttered-up Hotel de l'Univers, and a perky deserted villa or two, on the embankment; a cliff behind them, topped by a little gray church; the road that led up the gorge losing itself in the turn—and that was all that was visible of Ravetot-sur-Mer. A projecting cliff bounded the bay at each side, and in front seethed the gray, angry Channel.

It was an Aceldama of a spot in winter, and only a matter of peculiar urgency had brought me thither. Viviette and her decrepit rascal of a father were tied to Ravetot by sheer poverty. He owned a pretty villa half a mile inland, and the rent he obtained for it during the summer months enabled them to live in some miraculous way the rest of the year.

They, the curé, and the fisher-folk were the sole winter inhabitants of the place. The nearest doctor lived at Illerville, twenty kilometers away, and there

was not even an educated farmer in the neighborhood. Yet I could not help thinking that my little friend's last remark was somewhat disingenuous.

"Are you quite sure, my dear," I said, "that no one ever comes to Ravetot?"

"Has father told you?" she asked tonelessly.

"No. I guessed it. I have extraordinary powers of divination. And the somebody has been making my little girl miserable."

"He has broken my heart," said Viviette.

I pulled the collar of my fur-lined coat above my ears which the northeast wind was biting. Being elderly and heart-whole I am sensitive to cold. I proposed that we should walk up and down the jetty while she told me her troubles, and I hooked her arm in mine.

"Who was *he?*" I asked. "And what was he doing here?"

"Oh, doctor, what does it matter?" she answered tearfully. "I never want to see him again."

"Don't fib," said I. "If the confounded blackguard were here now——"

"But he isn't a blackguard!" she flashed. "If he were I shouldn't be so miserable. I should forget him. He is good and kind and noble and everything that is right. I couldn't have expected him to act otherwise—it was awful, horrible—and when you called me by name I thought it was he."

"And the contradictious feminine did very much want to see him," said I.

"I suppose so," she confessed.

I looked down at the pretty face and saw that it was wan and pinched.

"You have been eating little and sleeping less. For how long?" I demanded sternly.

"For a week," she said pitifully.

"We must change all that. This abominable hole is a kind of cold-storage for depression."

She drew my arm tighter. She had always been an affectionate little girl, and now she seemed to crave human sympathy and companionship.

"I don't mind it now. It doesn't in the least matter where I am. Before he came I used to hate Ravetot, and long for the gaiety and brightness of the great world. I used to stand here for hours and just long and long for something to happen to take us away; and it seemed no good. Here I was for the rest of time—with nothing to do day after day but housework and sewing and reading, while father sat by the fire, with his little roulette-machine and Monte Carlo averages and paper and pencil, working out the wonderful system that is going to make our fortune. We'll never have enough money to go to Monte Carlo for him to try it, so that is some comfort. One would have thought he had had enough of gambling."

She made the allusion, very simply, to me—an old friend. Her father had gambled away a fortune, and in desperation had forged another man's name on the back of a bill, for which he had suffered a term of imprisonment. His relatives had cast him out. That was why he lived in poverty-stricken seclusion at Ravetot-sur-Mer. He was not an estimable old man, and I had always pitied Viviette for being so parented. Her mother had died years ago. I thought I would avoid the painful topic.

"And so," said I, after we had gone the length of the jetty in silence and had turned again, "one day when the lonely little princess was staring out to sea and longing for she knew not what, the young prince out of the fairy-tale came riding up behind her, and stayed just long enough to make her lose her heart, and then rode off again."

"Something like it—only worse," she murmured. And then, with a sudden break in her voice: "I will tell you all about it. I shall go mad if I don't. I haven't a soul in the world to speak to. Yes, he came. He found me standing at the end of the jetty. He asked his way in French to the cemetery, and I recognized from his accent that he was English like myself. I asked him why he wanted to go to the cemetery. He said that it was to see his wife's grave.

The only Englishwoman buried here was a Mrs. Everest who was drowned last summer. This was the husband. He explained that he was in the Indian Civil Service, and was now on furlough. Being in Paris he thought he would like to come to Ravetot, where he could have quiet, in order to write a book."

"I understood it was to see his wife's grave," I remarked.

"He wanted to do that as well. You see, they had been separated for some years—judicially separated. She was not a nice woman. He didn't tell me so; he was too chivalrous a gentleman. But I had heard about her from the gossip of the place. I walked with him to the cemetery. I know a well-brought-up girl wouldn't have gone off like that with a stranger."

"My dear," said I, "in Ravetot-sur-Mer she would have gone off with a hippogriffin."

She pressed my arm. "How understanding you are, doctor, dear."

"I have an inkling of the laws that govern humanity," I replied ironically, yet secretly flattered by my young lady's tribute. "Well, and after the pleasant trip to the cemetery?"

"He asked me whether the café at the top of the hill was really the only place to stay at in Ravetot. It's dreadful, you know—no one goes there but fishermen and farm-laborers—and it *is* the only place. The hotel is shut up out of the season. I said that Ravetot didn't encourage visitors during the winter. He looked disappointed and said that he would have to find quiet somewhere else. Then he asked whether there wasn't any house that would take him in as a boarder."

She paused. "Well?" I inquired.

"Oh, doctor, he seemed so strong and kind, and his eyes were so frank, and I knew he was everything that a man ought to be. We were friends at once, and I hated the thought of losing him. It is not gay at Ravetot with only Jeanne to talk to from week's end to week's end. And then we are so poor—and you know we do take in paying guests when we can get them."

"I understand perfectly," said I.

She nodded. "That was how it all happened. Would a nice girl have done such a thing?"

I replied that if she knew as much of the ways of nice girls as I did, she would be astounded. She smiled wanly and went on with her artless story.

Of course Mr. Everest jumped at the suggestion. It is not given to every young and unlamenting widower to be housed beneath the same roof as so delicious a young woman as Viviette. He brought his luggage and took possession of the best spare room in the villa, while Viviette and old, slatternly Jeanne, the *bonne à tout faire*, went about with agitated minds and busy hands attending to his comforts.

Old Widdrington, however, in his morose chimney-corner, did not welcome the visitor. He growled and grumbled, and rated his daughter for not having doubled the terms. Didn't she know they wanted every penny they could get? Something was wrong with his roulette-machine which ought to be sent to Paris for repairs. Where was the money to come from? Viviette's father is the most unscrupulous, selfish old curmudgeon of my acquaintance.

Then, according to my young lady's incoherent and parenthetic narrative, followed idyllic days. Viviette chattered to Mr. Everest in the morning, walked with him in the afternoon, pretended to play the piano to him in the evening, and in between times sat with him at meals.

The inevitable happened. She had met no one like him before. He represented the strength and the music of the great world. He flashed upon her as the revelation of the vague visions that had floated before her eyes when she stared seaward in the driving wind.

That the man was a bit in love with her seems certain. I think that one day, when a wayside byre was sheltering them from the rain, he must have kissed her. A young girl's confidences are full of details; but the important ones are generally left out. They can

be divined, however, by the old and experienced. At any rate, Viviette was radiantly happy, and Everest appeared contented to stay indefinitely at Ravetot and watch her happiness.

Thus far the story was ordinary enough. Given the circumstances it would have been extraordinary if my poor little Viviette had not fallen in love with the man and if the man's heart had not been touched. In his position, thrown with Viviette for nearly three weeks, noon and night, I, venerable philosopher that I am, would have made a doting idiot of myself.

If Everest had found the girl's feelings too deep for his response and had precipitately bolted with a confused sense of acting honorably toward her, the story would also have been commonplace. The cause of his sudden riding away was peculiarly painful. Somehow I cannot blame him; and yet I am vain enough to imagine that I should have acted otherwise.

One morning Everest asked her if Jeanne might search his bedroom for a twenty-franc piece which he must have dropped on the floor. In the afternoon her father gave her twenty francs to get a postal order; he was sending to Paris for some fresh mechanism for his precious roulette-wheel.

Everest accompanied her to the little post-office. They walked arm in arm through the village like an affianced couple, and I fancy he must have said tenderer things than usual on the way, for at this stage of the story she wept.

When she paid the louis on the slab below the *guichet*, she noticed that it was a new Spanish coin. Spanish gold is rare. She showed it to Everest, and meeting his eyes read in them a curious questioning. The money-order obtained, they continued their walk happily, and Viviette forgot the incident.

Some days passed. Everest grew troubled and preoccupied. One livelong day he avoided her society altogether. She lived through it in a distressed wonder, and cried herself to sleep that night. How had she offended?

The next morning he gravely announced his departure. Urgent affairs summoned him to Paris. In dazed misery she accepted the payment of his account and wrote him a receipt. His face was set like a mask, and he looked at her out of cold, stern eyes which frightened her. In a timid way she asked him if he were going without one kind word.

"There are times, Miss Widdrington," said he, "when no word at all is the kindest."

"But what have I done?" she cried.

"Nothing at all but what is good and right. You may think whatever you like of me. Good-by."

He grasped his Gladstone bag, and through the window she saw him give it to the fisher-lad who was to carry it three miles to the nearest wayside station. He disappeared through the gate, and so out of her life.

Fat, slatternly Jeanne came upon her a few moments later moaning her heart out, and administered comfort. It was very hard for mademoiselle, but what could mademoiselle expect? Monsieur Everest could not stay any longer in the house. Naturally. Of course monsieur was a little touched in the brain, with his eternal calculations—he was not responsible for his actions. Still Monsieur Everest did not like monsieur to take money out of his room. But, Great God of Pity! Did not mademoiselle know that was the reason of Monsieur Everest going away?

"It was father who had stolen the Spanish louis," cried Viviette in a passion of tears, as we leaned once more against the parapet of the jetty. "He stole a fifty-franc note. He was caught red-handed by Mr. Everest rifling his despatch-box. Jeanne overheard them talking. It is horrible, horrible! How he must despise me! I feel wrapped in flames when I think of it—and I love him so—and I haven't slept for a week—and my heart is broken!"

I could do little to soothe this paroxysm save let it spend itself against my greatcoat while I again put my arm around her. The gray tide was leaping in and the fine spray dashed in my face. The early twilight began to set-

tle over Ravetot, which appeared more desolate than ever.

"Never mind, my dear," said I. "You are young, and as your soul is sweet and clean you will get over this."

"Never," she moaned.

"You will leave Ravetot-sur-Mer and all its associations, and the brightness of life will drive all the old shadows away!"

"No. It is impossible. My heart is broken, and I only want to stay here at the end of the jetty until I die!"

"I shall die, anyhow," I remarked, with a shiver, "if I stay here much longer, and I don't want to. Let us go home."

She assented, and we walked away from the sea and struck the gloomy inland road. Then I said, somewhat meaningly:

"Haven't you the curiosity to inquire why I left my comfortable house in London to come to this god-forsaken hole?"

"Why did you, doctor, dear?" she asked listlessly.

"To inform you that your cross old Aunt Caroline is dead, that she has left you three thousand pounds a year under my trusteeship till you are five and twenty, and that I am going to carry off the rich and beautiful Miss Viviette Widdrington to England to-morrow."

She stood still, looking at me open-mouthed.

"Is it true?" she gasped.

"Of course," said I.

Her face was transfigured with a sudden radiance. Amazement, rapture, youth—the pulsating wonder of her twenty years—danced in her eyes. In her excitement she pulled me by the lapels of my coat.

"Doctor! *Doctor!!* Three thousand pounds a year! England! London! Men and women! Everything I've longed for! All the glad and beautiful things of life!"

"Yes, my dear."

She took my hands and swung them backward and forward.

"It's Heaven! Delicious Heaven!" she cried.

"But what about the broken heart?" I said maliciously.

She dropped my hands, sighed, and her face suddenly assumed an expression of portentous misery.

"I was forgetting. What does anything matter now? I shall never get over it. My heart *is* broken!"

"The devil a bit, my dear," said I.

THE PRICELESS THOUGHT

A PENNY for my thought? I'll tell you this:
To me that thought is worth the whole of bliss.
Ten thousand kings, set on ten thousand thrones,
Have not a millionth part in precious stones,
In silver, gold, and other treasures rare,
Of what is mine in that one thought so fair
That you would buy for copper. E'en the mint
Itself compared to it hath nothing in't.
The chests of Cræsus, Monte Cristo, and
The added wealth of all our lavish land,
I would not take for that one precious thought,
Yet since you ask, I'll give it you for naught.
'Tis this, Sweetheart, come hither and incline
Your ear that I may whisper—
"Thou art mine!"

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.

CUPID and CLAM FRITTERS

By Joseph C. Lincoln

TINA told me this story. Her full name is Constantina Susannah Evelina Briggs, and her father Ephraim Briggs keeps the lighthouse at Pegontic Island, which is five miles from Trumet on the bay side of the Cape. I was at Pegontic for a month because my doctor said I needed rest, and there is more rest there than anything else, except sand. Old Ephraim mooned about, smoking, digging clams, and attending to his brasses and wicks, while his daughter cooked, washed, swept, scoured, and talked. There is little fun talking to Eph, because he is deaf; therefore Tina was glad of my presence and made the most of it.

I discovered that she was of a romantic disposition—though she didn't look it—that she had never been to the city, though she meant to go some day, and that her dissipation was reading love-stories of a certain type. Her favorite authoress was the late Mrs. Southworth, and she had twenty-eight volumes of that talented lady's works bound in paper covers and dog's-eared and tattered from much rereading. One evening when, having feasted heartily upon steamed clams, we sat at the open door watching the moonlight dance on the water, she told me the tale of "Billy." And as she told it to me, so I shall endeavor to tell it to you. Please imagine that I am shouting at the top of my voice, because when one has been living alone with a deaf person one gets in the habit of shouting.

"I called him 'Billy,' " whooped Tina, "though his name was Willard Duncan, and he was a genuine, sure-enough doctor just hatched from one of them schools where they teach you doctorin' and the cuttin' up of folks so's to get acquainted with their works. He told me yarns about 'operations' and such till I couldn't clean a fish scursely without squirmin'. Yet he was a reel kind-hearted critter and meant well. I don't know's that's much recommendation, when you come to think of it; I cal'late you could say that about the folks in a lunatic asylum.

"But Billy really was a nice feller, and when pa fetched him home from Trumet one day and says he'd like to board with us for a spell and what did I think about takin' him, I says: 'All right; I cal'late we can stand it if he can. Heave ahead and take. Only,' I says, 'don't you let him come under any mistakes. You tell him we don't have callers more'n twice a month, and that the graveyard's got this place beat a mile fur's sassiety's concerned.'

"However, it seemed that sassiety was the very thing he was hankerin' to get away from. What he was sufferin' from was the need of quiet. Well, we've got quiet enough here to peddle round a county, so after he'd hollered his lungs loose fixin' up the price of board with pa, his trunk was fetched over from the main, and he settled down with us to be lodger in the spare bedroom. He never fussed about his vittles, and pretty soon him and me got to be real folksy. He was a nice-lookin' young feller, sort of high-toned and mysterious, like Lord Cyril in 'The Peasant Bride,' and I took to him right off. Him and me used to talk together evenin's, after dish-washin' was over. You see he had to talk to somebody, and there ain't nothin' 'quiet' about a chat with pa.

"I used to read out loud to him sometimes, 'The Peasant Bride' and such. He'd set and listen and 'twas only by his smokin'—he smoked like a whale-ile lantern—that I knew he was awake. I done my best to pump him and find out where he come from and what fetched him to Pegontic, but, though he'd tell me about his carvin' people and the like of that, when it got to what I really wanted to find out he'd shut up like a quahaug-shell and you couldn't pry another statement out of him with a crowbar. Yet I had my suspicions. I ain't traveled none to speak of—never been no further than Provincetown—but my readin' has kept me in touch with life among the big-bugs, and I cal'lated I could guess what disease he was suff'rin' from.

"And one day it all come out. Pa'd gone off in the dory to haul lobster-pots, and me and Billy was up in the gallery of the lighthouse spyin' out things ashore with a pair of glasses he'd fetched with him. Pretty soon along comes one of them gasoline power-boats, not the kind Ez Snow has to go coddin' in, but a slick little craft, all gilt and gorgeousness, with flags and awnin's and the land knows what. She was scootin' past the island, about a ha'f-mile from shore, and you could hear her engyne wheezin' steady but subdued, same as Almena Payson, who lives in Trumet and has the asthma chronic, does in prayer-meetin'. There was folks aboard of her, settin' aft under the awnin's, and, it bein' my turn to spy, I took a squint at 'em through the glasses.

"'Humph!' says I. 'I know who that is. That's Gen'ral Thornton's launch, from over to Wellmouth. He's the millionaire who's hired the Payne house for the summer. There's the old critter himself settin' aft in a rattan armchair. I wisht he couldn't get up till he give me ha'f his money.'

"Billy had been takin' only a mild kind of int'rest in the spyin' so fur, but now he woke up, as you might say, and stepped over to where I was, brisk and eager.

"'Hey?' he says. 'Gen'ral Thornton? Is he there? Is—is any one with him? Let me take those glasses.'

"But I wa'n't quite through spyin' yet. 'Yes,' says I, 'there's somebody with him. A woman, a young woman, and she's all fixed up for Sunday, too. Sakes alive! I can see the jewel'ry on her fingers shine way here. It's that daughter of his, that's who 'tis. They tell me he's so afraid of havin' her look cross-eyed at a man that he all but makes her wear blinders. Well, it'll take more'n blinders to keep the men from lookin' at *her*. I declare! she's as pretty as "Pansy, the beautiful silk-spinner," in the story I was readin' you. She——'

"He grabbed the glasses out of my hand and clapped 'em to his own eyes. 'Edna!' says he, to himself. And he looked and looked and looked.

"'Oh!' says I. 'Edna, hey? Hum! Is *that* what you call her?'

"He never made no answer. Just stared at that power-boat as long as 'twas in sight. And when 'twas nothin' but a speck in the distance he kind of groaned, shut up the spy-glasses, and went down-stairs without speakin' a word. But I didn't care. Thinks I: 'Billy, my son, I've what you call "diagnosed" your complaint. You've got "Edna" bad, and if I don't make you tell your symptoms afore this day's over then my name ain't Tina Briggs.'

"And that night—'twas moonlight, same as now—I found him settin' alone on an empty eel-car out by the henhouse, and I went for him red hot.

"'Look here,' I says to him. 'Are you and this Edna Thornton engaged? Or ain't you and would like to be? Or is she engaged to somebody else? You tell me now. Talk it right out of your system; 'twill do you good. I sha'n't never tell and I'm interested. I like you fust-rate and maybe I can help you.'

"He laughed, bitter as wormwood tea. 'Help me!' says he, and laughed again.

"'Yes,' I says; 'help was what I said. 'Twas the poor cripple in the junk-shop that helped Lord Cyril, and *I* ain't crippled none to speak of. I ain't any-

body's fool if I do have fits.' Course I ain't subject to epileptics, but that's just a sayin'. 'Come,' I says, 'you know you want to tell; why don't you do it?'

"Fust off I thought he was goin' to get mad; but he didn't. Fact is, I cal'late he just couldn't keep his troubles to himself any longer. He commenced by tellin' me a few things; then he got a-goin' and couldn't stop till he hove overboard the whole cargo. And this is it; this is what sent him to Pegontic:

"Seems that he'd met this Edna Thornton at a woman's club place up to the city. She and a whole lot more young females with elbow-gloves and time on their hands was havin' an afternoon tea for the benefit of the poor, and Edna was pourin' it. Billy had wandered in with another young carver from the medicine-college, and the minute he laid eyes on the Thornton girl he was a gone goose. He got an introduction to her right off, and when he left that club place his scuppers was awash with tea and his heart with love. She kind of took to him, too, and they saw each other frequent from then on. 'Twould have been more frequent still only for one thing—Papa Thornton.

"Papa wa'n't given to tea, much. Likewise he hadn't any use for homeopaths, which was the partic'lar brand of doctorizin' Billy was learnin'. The old man had made a schooner-load of money out of mines and such, and had reached the age where he could afford to retire and have diseases. Disease was his favorite dissipation and, havin' tried most kinds, he'd settled down to dyspepsy and appendicitis. He'd never really had appendicitis, you understand, but he'd been satisfactorily threatened with it a lot of times, and he carted round a doctor whose specialty was lookin' out for folks' inwards, so's to have him ready in case of need. This doctor had a mean enough job—the Thornton temper bein' shorter'n pie-crust—but he got an admiral's wages and took his vengeance by givin' the old man all kinds of awful-tastin' physic and keepin' him on a dyspepsy diet. His name was Woodward, and he was a alopath from his shins up.

"Well, 'twas this Woodward man who fust found out how things stood betwixt Edna and Billy. He give the general a nudge, as you might say, and the old man went up into the air.

"'The idea!' says he to his daughter. 'The idea of your keepin' company with an idiot who gives sugar pills and colored water to sick folks! 'Tain't that he's poor; I've got money enough to keep a husband for you. And 'tain't because he's a doctor; I'd just as soon have an extry doctor aboard the family. But a homeopath! By the great everlastin'! If you ever so much as look at him again I'll'—etcetery and so forth.

"Well, poor Edna was all set back. She tried to explain that Billy was a modern homeopath, who could give as mean medicine as the next one if 'twas necessary and could cut up a person with one hand tied behind him. But that didn't do no good. Then she cried, and that started her pa's nervous dyspepsy goin' and made things worse than ever. Finally she got mad and said she'd marry Billy anyhow, if they didn't have a cent and was so poor they had to have tea poured for 'em. This was serious, and the gen'ral took measures accordin'.

"He hired the Payne cottage at Wellmouth, and him and Doctor Woodward and Edna and a crew of servants come down there on the quiet without sayin' a word to anybody. But Billy found it out and down he comes to board right acrost the road. He managed to see Edna once and the pair was quite hopeful, when that dratted Woodward got on and told the girl that if her young man didn't clear out he'd tell dad and the whole outfit would start for Kamchatka or the Cape of Good Hope or somewheres. And he told Billy the same thing, and the poor critter was about wild. He knew if they went to Kamchatka he couldn't foller 'em, unless the walkin' was drier than it had been yet, and he didn't know what to do. Then he met my pa and learned about Pegontic Island. So he'd come

to board with us. The Thorntons thought he'd gone for good—all but Edna; he'd smuggled a note to her by one of the servants—and he was where he could see the roof of their house through the spy-glasses. No wonder he was blue and lonesome, poor thing.

"That yarn just stirred me all up. 'Twas so romantic, just like somethin' out of a book. I made up my mind I'd fetch them sufferin' souls together or die tryin'.

"'H'm!' says I. 'This Edna girl seems to have consider'ble spunk to her; why don't she just march out of the house and marry you anyhow? Why don't you and her elope? Elopements are common as sand-flies; I've read about dozens of 'em.'

"'Elope!' says he, disgusted. 'Might as well elope with a chained bulldog. She ain't never left alone; either the gen'ral or Woodward is watching her all the time. She's locked in her room nights, and there's servants paid to spy on her. And if she should insist on going out her father would have one of his serious attacks and might die. Neither she nor I would wish to kill the old gentleman.'

"'Stuff and rubbish!' I snaps. 'I guess he'd get over it all right. Attacks like that are convenient to have sometimes. The thing to do is to marry fust and tell him afterward. I'd risk his bein' took sick then, when there wa'n't no use in it.'

"But Billy only shook his head. I could see he'd about give up in despair. *I* hadn't; I'd only begun hopin'.

"The summer loafed along and Billy loafed along with it. He got bluer and bluer, and the only times he'd cheer up was when the Thornton power-boat went by and he could watch her through the glasses. Pa went to the main once in a while, and there he learned that the gen'ral's health was pickin' up amazin' and that he felt well enough to go out sailin' occasional, him and another man, in a decked-in dory. The gilt launch would have suited *me* better, but I ain't got neither mines nor dyspepsy. Anyhow we saw less and less of the power-boat, and Billy was over head and heels in the dumps. One evenin', early in September, the three of us, me and pa and Billy, was settin' by the door here. It had started off to be fine, but a squall had sprung up and a thick fog with it, and now 'twas nasty enough. And it bid fair to be nastier still. Pa—and he's no slouch of a weather prophet even if he is hard of hearin'—said he cal'lated we was in for a howlin' old gale that would last two or three days. I said I cal'lated the same thing. Billy never said nothin', bein' so fur in the dumps that you'd have had to drag for him.

"And then, off in the wind and fog, we heard somebody yellin', yellin' to beat the cars. 'Twas 'Help!' and 'Save me!' and a lot more, mixed up with an amazin' pile of diff'rent kinds of language.

"'Heavens to Betsy!' I sings out. 'Somebody's adrift out there and in trouble, by the sound. Get the boat quick.'

"We had a little power-boat of our own—eighteen foot, one and a half hoss-power—that we used to go back and forth to the main in. Billy, he come out of his dumps, and run to the beach. I howled into pa's starboard ear till he sensed somethin' of what was the matter, and then he run after Billy. I stayed behind; you can't leave a light to run itself, if you want to keep your job under Uncle Sam.

"The yellin' and swearin' and prayin' kept up, off there in the fog. Then I heard our boat coughin' out in the direction of the yells. She coughed pretty consumptive; the engyne hadn't been workin' good for some time.

"I listened with all my ears, hearin' the hails back and forth, and pretty soon I judged they'd picked up the castaway, whoever he was. Then the coughs came nigher, and I run down to the shore. There was three folks in the boat now, pa in the stern, by the engyne and tiller-ropes, Billy in the bow, and a groanin' lump of miser'bleness amidships.

"'Who is it?' I commenced. But Billy was ashore afore I could get any further, grabbed me by the arm and run

me up the beach. He was shakin' all over; I could feel the shakes through my shawl.

"'Get me out of here, Tina, quick!' he pants. 'Quick! It's Gen'ral Thornton; he mustn't see me! Do you hear? He *mustn't!*'

"'Gen'ral Thornton!' I gasped. 'Gen'ral Thornton! Well, of all things in life! Mustn't see you? Ain't he seen you already?'

"'No; not to know me, he hasn't. It's pitch-dark, and I've grown my beard since I've been here. But he mustn't see me now. Where shall I go?'

"'Go into the henhouse,' says I, thinkin' fast. 'And stay there till I let you out. Daddy Thornton, hey? Gracious sakes alive! If this ain't Providence then I'll quit goin' to meetin'. Somethin'll come of this, somethin' good. Get into that henhouse.'

"He run off up the beach, and I hustled down to meet pa and the passenger. The gen'ral was in a pretty bad way. You see, he'd had a mighty close call, thanks to his own foolishness. Him and his sailorman had had a rumpus and, without sayin' anything to nobody but just to prove that he could do it, he'd gone off in that decked-in dory all sole alone, knowin' no more about handlin' her than a cat does about Scripture. Fust he got lost in the fog, then the wind breezed up and capsized the dory. He'd clung onto her and drifted along, yellin' for help. Pa and Billy had got to him just in time. The dory was all stove up and good for nothin'.

"We got him up to the house, filled him full of hot water and ginger, and put him to bed. While I was b'ilin' the water I was doin' some tall plannin'. Soon's the old man was tucked up and calmed down I got pa one side and told him he must take Mr. Duncan right over to the main in our power-boat. I said that the gen'ral's daughter ought to know where her dad was, and that Billy, bein' a friend of the family, was the one to notify her.

"Pa didn't want to go a mite, he was dead sartin a storm was comin' and was 'fraid he might not be able to get back right off. I told him I'd look after the light, and, finally, when I mentioned that, more'n likely, he'd be paid well for the trip by the Thorntons, he agreed to go. Then I chased to the henhouse and routed out Billy himself, who was shut up with a mess of roostin' Plymouth Rock pullets. Neither the pullets nor him seemed to enjoy each other's company.

"'Billy Duncan,' says I, 'now's your time. The gen'ral's out of the way, and can't get *in* the way till you and Edna have had your chance. I've arranged for pa to take you ashore at Wellmouth. You march straight up to the house, explain everything to Edna, and then you and her go straight to the parson's and be married. *After* the ceremony you can come here for the gen'ral; but don't you do it afore.'

"'But Woodward'll be there,' says he.

"'What of it?' says I, sharp. 'He ain't the girl's guardian. If he gets sassy you knock him down. Heavens to Betsy! You ain't afraid of him, be you?'

"He bristled right up and give out that he wa'n't afraid of nobody. Him and me had a ten minutes' experience-meetin' but at last he agreed to go.

"'I may be able to *see* Edna, at any rate,' he says.

"'See her!' says I, impatient. 'If you ain't Mr. Edna before I see you again then I hope I'll *never* see you. You spunk up and be a man. Do you want to spile the best idea that never was, outside of a book? Go, this minute!'

"And he went, him and pa in our power-boat. And me and old Gen'ral Dyspepsy was left alone on Pegontic.

"All that night I was busy, 'tendin' the light and dryin' the old man's duds so's he could have 'em when he turned out in the mornin'. And when mornin' come the biggest gale I ever see for that season of the year was on full blast.

"The wind and rain and sea was somethin' fierce. You couldn't see two hundred yards from the beach, 'twas

such a mix-up of foam and water. Pa and the bridal-couple hadn't showed up yet, and I give up expectin' 'em. I trusted pa to have more sense than to leave port in that hurricane.

"Old Thornton come down-stairs about ten o'clock. He was all right again, but cross as two sticks. 'Ugh!' he snaps. 'Why wasn't I called sooner?'

"'Oh,' says I, 'you needed the rest, I judged, and I thought I'd let you have it.'

"'Ugh!' he grunts again. 'Well, where's my breakfast?'

"'Right on the stove,' says I. 'How'll you have your eggs cooked?'

"'Eggs!' says he. 'I can't eat eggs. They're bad for me. I'm under the doctor's care; didn't you know that?'

"I was set back some. 'Well, now,' says I, 'that's too bad. Eggs is about all I've got just now. I can give you some toast-bread and coffee, but that ain't much of a breakfast.'

"'I can't drink coffee,' he says, 'and I wouldn't eat toast if I was dyin'. This is a devil of a hole! Where's the other two idiots, those that got me here?'

"I'd been up all night and *my* temper wa'n't any too good. 'The others,' I says, 'have gone ashore to fetch help for you. And unless they *are* idiots they won't try to get back here until this gale lets up. And I don't see any signs of its lettin' up yet a while!'

"When he found he'd got to stay on the island whether he wanted to or not, he *was* mad. He marched up and down the kitchen, lookin' out of the winder and rippin' about the weather.

"'I want somethin' to eat,' he snarls. 'I didn't have any dinner and I'm starved.'

"'Eggs are nice and fresh,' says I.

"He ripped out a remark that sent the eggs to a hotter place than the stove, and kept up his paradin'.

"'I 'most wish they'd let me drown,' says he. 'Might as well drown as starve.'

"I 'most wished they had, too, but I shut my teeth and said nothin'.

"The gale got worse instead of better. At noon I had some dinner, eggs and tea and bread. He ate a piece of bread, but he wouldn't touch nothin' else. Seems his reg'lar fodder was some kind of special dyspepsy food, and I didn't have it on hand; dyspepsy and Pegontic Island had been strangers up to then.

"At three o'clock 'twas low tide and I went down to the flats, in the rain, and dug a bucket of clams; I was tirin' of eggs, myself. I fried up a big mess of clam fritters for supper. He hung around, sniffin'.

"'By George!' says he. 'Those things smell good.'

"They *are* good,' says I. 'I can fry clams if I do say it.'

"I set the table and put on the fritters. I put on a slice of bread and a cup of hot water for him.

"'Set down,' says I. 'Supper's ready.'

"He set, lookin' sour enough at the bread. I commenced on a fritter.

"'Here!' he sings out, after a minute. 'Let me taste of that—that you're eatin'.'

"'Good land!' says I. 'You don't want that. Fried clams are tough enough for a healthy stomach, let alone one with a busted mainspring.'

"He didn't give a hoot; he wanted to taste of them fritters.

"'All right,' says I, disgusted. 'There you be. Only don't say I didn't warn you.'

"He ate the whole of that fritter. 'By George,' says he, 'that's good! Give me another. And put some tea in my cup.'

"'Tea! Why, you ain't allowed to drink tea; you said so, yourself.'

"Didn't make no diff'rence. Tea he wanted and tea he got. Three full cups he drank and ate seven big fritters. Finally, when he couldn't possibly hold another layer, he got up and made proclamations that he was goin' to bed. I told him he'd better set a spell and let the fritters and tea get acquainted; but no, 'twas bed for him. After he'd gone I put a flatiron in the oven to heat and set on the kettle to bile. I cal'lated there'd be trouble afore mornin'.

"I guessed right. When, about eleven o'clock, the gale commenced to let up and the sea to go down, I begun to hope that pa'd get back from the main in time for me to have a little nap; but 'twan't to be. Pa didn't come and, at three or so, there was a howl from the gen'ral's room. The tea and clams had got him.

"By five he was a whoopin', groanin' loon, if ever I saw one, and at ha'f past six he was sure he was goin' to die. The hot water and the flatiron wa'n't helpin' him none to speak of and I begun to be scart. Then I heard the bark of a gasoline engyne, and run outdoor to tell pa to hurry.

"But it wa'n't pa at all. 'Twas that gilt launch of the Thorntons' and in it, besides the man at the tiller, was Edna, the daughter, and a pompous critter with nose-glasses. Billy wa'n't with 'em and my heart hit my shoe-soles; my great plan had got a spike in its wheels somehow.

"The launch run up to the landin'. I went down to meet it.

"'Hi!' hails the nose-glass man. 'I say, my good woman, have you seen anything of——'

"'I am Miss Thornton, of Wellmouth,' breaks in the girl. 'This gentleman is Doctor Woodward. My father, Gen'ral Thornton, left home night before last in the sailboat, bound for Trumet. He hasn't been heard from since. I am dreadfully worried. *Have* you seen——'

"'There! There!' says I. 'It's all right. Your papa's in the house yonder. And if that's his doctor, he's needed right off. Tell him not to lose no time. I'll tell the gen'ral you're comin'.'

"There was a chorus of hallelujahs from the launch; Edna all but had hysterics, and the alopath, who'd been figgerin', I guess, that his soft job had gone to the bottom of the bay, was all smiles. I picked up my skirts and put for the house.

"But when Old Dyspepsy heard the news he wa'n't so glad as I thought he'd be. He was rollin' over the bed, holdin' onto himself amidships, but amongst his groans he found time to give me my sailin' orders.

"'Don't you tell Woodward I ate those dummed clams,' says he. 'Don't you dare mention 'em.'

"He seemed to be more afraid of my tellin' about the clams than he was of dyin', a good sight; so, to pacify him, I agreed to keep mum. Then his daughter and the doc bust into the room, and there was huggin' and more hysterics. Three was company and four a crowd, so I cleared out for the kitchen. All I could think of was: 'Where's Billy?'

"The powwow in the room kept gettin' louder and louder. Then I heard the old man using the most lively language he'd used yet and the Edna girl sobbin'. Her father was objectin' to somethin' and doin' it emphatic. In a jiffy down-stairs comes that Woodward critter, lookin' important but anxious.

"'I'm going over to the house at once,' says he. 'Gen'ral Thornton is suff'rin' from acute appendicitis, and I fear it will be necessary to perform an operation immediately. I shall return, as soon as I can, with the Wellmouth physician and my instruments. Keep the patient in bed and continue the hot applications. Do you understand?'

"I understood—some. 'Land of love!' I sings out. 'You ain't goin' to cut the poor thing up, be you? That ain't no more needed than two tails to a cat. He ain't got appendicitis. What ails him is——'

"But he waved his hands, high and impressive. 'I don't need advice as to my profession,' says he. 'You do as I tell you. I shall return in an hour.'

"He started for the landin' on the dead run and I after him. But afore I got to the dock I see a dory under sail, beatin' inshore. Pa was steerin' the dory, and Billy Duncan was with him.

"Woodward never so much as looked at the dory. He jumped aboard the launch, hollered an order or two, and then him and the man got her under way and headed full speed for Wellmouth point. A minute or so later pa was makin' the dory fast to the landin'-post.

"Billy was the fust one ashore. 'What's the matter with you?' says I. 'Why didn't you elope, same's I told you to?'

"'She wasn't at home,' he says. 'She and Woodward had gone up to Trumet in the auto. We went there and found they had left for Ostable on an errand. Then our engine gave out and the storm got worse. This morning we borrowed a sailboat and came back. I——'

"'Land sakes!' I broke in. 'Did a body ever see such luck? That was Woodward in that launch. He's left Edna in the house with her pa and has gone to fetch more sawbones and his carvin' set. He says the gen'ral's got appendicitis and he's a-goin' to operate on him the minute he gets back.'

"'Edna!' says he. 'Is she here?'

"'Yes,' says I, 'she is. But never mind her now. It's her dad we must think of. He swears he won't be carved, and I don't blame him. He ain't got appendicitis: he ate seven greasy clam fritters last night and soaked 'em with a gallon of strong tea. And him with a weak digestion! What ails him,' says I, 'is stomach-ache.'

"Billy looked at me for a full minute without speakin', his eyes gettin' brighter every second.

"'Stomach-ache?' says he. 'Clams? Are you *sure?*'

"'Course I'm sure. Didn't I see him eat? Don't think I'd forget it, do you?'

"'Great Scott!' he gasps. 'And Woodward wants to operate. Does he know about the clams?'

"'No, no! Course he don't. The old gent made me swear not to tell. And don't you let on you know, either. If you do I'll get into—— Where you goin'?'

"He turned and looked at me, his eyes shinin' sparks.

"'Goin'?' he says. 'I'm goin' to save the life of my future father-in-law. With any kind of luck there'll be no operation *this* day.'

"Pa called to me then and I had to go to him. Soon as ever I could get through tellin' him that the light was all right and that nothin' special had happened, I raced to that sick-room. Billy was settin' by the bed, makin' examinations of the patient. Old Thornton was lookin' more peaceful, but still anxious. As for Edna she looked joyful all down one side and scared up the other.

"'I tell you, sir,' says Billy, 'that I can cure you without an operation. I'll risk my professional reputation on it. If you're not better inside of an hour then I'll withdraw from the case, and Woodward may do as he sees fit.'

"'No, he won't,' howls old Thornton. 'He sha'n't kill me with his hospital tricks. I know what he's up to. He wants to get rid of me for reasons of his own. By the livin'——' and so on.

"'Shall I try, sir?' asks Billy, eager. 'I'm sure I can relieve you almost immediately.'

"'Oh, do, father!' pleads Edna. 'Do let him try, father, dear! I couldn't bear to have you undergo an operation.'

"The gen'ral looked at the pair of 'em hard. 'All right,' says he, finally, 'you may try. You're a fool of a homeopath and you give sugar pills, but I'll forgive you for bein' the fool if you get me out of this. Yes, yes!' he yells, doublin' up with another spasm. 'I'll forgive you anything—and give you anything, either. Go ahead! What are you waitin' for?'

"'Billy stood up and peeled off his coat. 'There'll be no sugar pills in this,' says he. 'Tina, bring me my medicine-case from my room. And such and such bottles. Then you and Edna stand by. *We've* got to work.'

"We worked, sure enough. I can't tell you what he done the job with. There was a stomach-pump and mustard plasters and doses of stuff that the bare smell of was enough for me. If the truck he poured into that poor sufferer was homeopath then I'm t'other school all the time. But this I know; they fixed the clams and the tea. Woodward and Doctor Payson from Wellmouth and another pill-mixer from Trumet arrived an hour and a ha'f later, and by that time Gen'ral Thorn-

ton was settin' up in the rockin'-chair, weak, and empty as a rinsed-out jug, but loaded to the rails with bad temper.

"'Get out of here!' he says to Woodward. 'You and your vivisectionists'—or some such name—'get out! I put your name in my will and so you wanted to kill me, but, thanks to this young man, I've fooled you. Appendicitis! Do you suppose I want to employ an idiot who doesn't know appendicitis from indigestion? Go! Get my man to put you ashore; then pack your trunks and never let me see you again. If there's any money due I'll send you a check.'

"Woodward looked spiteful at Billy, who was standin' there, all perspiration and in the midst of medicine-bottles. As he looked his mouth dropped open.

"'Why!' says he. 'This is Duncan, the young rascal who tried to steal your daughter. He's the very man who——'

"The gen'ral snapped at him like a dogfish.

"'I don't remember that that is your business,' he says. 'Are you goin' or aren't you?'

"'But he's a homeopath,' began Woodward. He didn't get no further.

"'Homeopath!' sings out old Thornton. 'Homeopath! Lord! I can taste his medicine yet. I don't care *what* he is. He saved my life when you wanted to murder me and he can have anything I've got, Edna included. Here, girl,' he adds, turnin' to me, 'get your father at once. It seems we shall have to put this person off the premises by force.'

"But we didn't. He went his own self.

"Billy come to me a spell later, all lit up like a lantern, with grins.

"'Tina,' he says, 'how can we ever thank you? I'm to be his family physician, and Edna and I can marry tomorrow, if we want to.'

"'Humph!' says I. 'It's Woodward you ought to thank, him and his fool appendicitis.'

"But it did work out like a storybook, didn't it, even though the machinery *was* kind of diff'rent? Whoever heard of lovers bein' fetched together by a mess of fried clams?"

ON THE LATMIAN STEEP

LEAN low, dear Love, the gods are very near.
I feel the breath of immortality;
Rich sighs from those who yearn eternally
For loves unknown to an Olympian sphere.
Fold arms about our human love, so dear;
Keep lips to lips lest goddess lips should be
Slipped in between our kissing lips, and we
Lose of our love one sigh, one kiss, one tear.
Shall lovers faint at finding love too sweet?
Or joy prove greater than the heart may bear?
Nay! If such perfect bliss is far too fleet
The jealous gods have found it far too fair.
Lean low, then, Love, and let our kisses meet
Lest of our love immortals steal a share.

RHODA HERO DUNN.

AFTER VELASQUEZ

By Austin Adams



AS a matter of record and common knowledge, my connection with the case of the bogus Velasquez dates from my arrest, on a hysterical demand of the French authorities, in London. As a matter of fact, however, it was I who discovered Rafael Yglesias and precipitated the catastrophe by introducing old Rothstein to him. Also, it is generally supposed that I, like everybody else, lost track of Yglesias when he dropped mysteriously out of sight, on the eve of the trial. The truth of the matter is, that it was I who planned his escape and covered his tracks against all possible detection. I was with him to the end.

Now that the affair of the stolen Velasquez, or, as the Paris newspapers called it, "*Le Mystère du Larron Pénitent*," has become an old story, I can, at last, state the facts without hurting anybody or running the risk of stirring once more into flame the embers of what threatened, in the height of the excitement, to become an international conflagration.

Justice feels satisfied. Old Rothstein has got his deserts; Mr. Gideon P. Botts his money back; and Rafael Yglesias the rewards never denied genius in our smug bourgeois world. The incident is closed. Only the mystery of the "Penitent Thief" remains—a mystery.

I can now afford to be frank; I will be frank, not alone because the solution of any mystery is a fascinating task, but to get a load off my mind. Not to throw light upon the secret history of the cleverest and most baffling of all fraudulent dealings in "Old Masters," do I now tell what I know of the "*Affaire Rothstein*," but to combat the erroneous idea that the plummet of public opinion can ever fathom the mystery of human motive.

My peculiar line of work—I am the confidential adviser of a few wealthy American collectors of paintings—takes me frequently to Paris. It was there that I first met Rafael Yglesias. As nobody of whom I inquired about the boy—not even Achille Badeau, who knows everybody—had ever heard of him, I may say truthfully that I discovered Yglesias. I might have passed him without so much as a glance at his big canvas had it not been for the fact that one of my most critical clients had just commissioned me to procure as good a copy as money could buy, of Velasquez's "Adoration of the Magi," in the National Gallery in London.

And the worst of it was, that in all Europe I didn't know of a copyist capable of doing what I wanted done. My old stand-by, Petruchi of Florence, was dead, and the only other possible man,

Martinez of Madrid—a born copyist if heaven ever made one—had quit the Prado, whose canvases he had reproduced with almost supernatural exactness, to go doddering up and down the Breton coast, painting impressionist marines.

From a fruitless search, therefore, I returned to Paris and wrote Mr. Wentworth that the secret of Velasquez's surfacing had died with poor Petruchi; that fairly good things were still to be had, however, after other masters; and that, if he left it to me, I would try a Rubens.

I posted the letter and went to the Louvre to have a look around and to fortify my somewhat offhand choice of Rubens. Moreover, I felt almost sure that some one would be copying a Rubens—always, at the Louvre, some one is copying a Rubens—and it might be my good fortune to find a fit one at it. Nor was I disappointed.

A huge canvas hung on an easel at right angles with the corridor, half-way down the long row of Rubens. It hid the painter. Not even a foot showed below it. Catalogue in hand and affecting the air of the casual visitor, I strolled past the easel, turning to look only after I had got some distance beyond it and given whomever it might be an opportunity to take my measure and dismiss me from his mind. My first furtive glimpse of the painter and his work brought me to a stop; my second—a frank stare of amazement—wheeled me right about; and the next moment I was standing beside—genius.

The young painter—he looked to be not a day over eighteen—sat perched on the high stool with his little legs curled under him tailor-fashion and his narrow shoulders drooped forward over his sunken chest; as odd a manikin as I had ever seen. But it was the head that appealed. It was magnificent. Under the great mane of coal-black hair the superb temples gleamed, proclaiming imagination, exquisite sensitiveness, creative power. The pure Greek profile—tilted upward in dreamy contemplation when I first saw it—was chiseled clean as if done in Carrara; the eyes small but immense in their brimming spirituality; the lips passionate, emotional, showing vivid red against the pallor of the thin drawn face.

Such was Rafael Yglesias when I discovered him. And his work! Even before I subjected the painting to anything like criticism in detail I recognized its supreme merit. The drawing was, of course, perfect; also the coloring. For a beggarly handful of *livres* any one of a score of starving copyists about the Pitti Palace or the Roman churches will turn you out perfect drawing and perfect coloring.

What eludes the best of them is—well, what Ruskin calls "the correggiosity of Correggio." Your copyist, be he never so exact, will fill your order to a dot—for everything but the "soul" of the original. The Rubens which Rafael Yglesias had just finished was—Rubens!

Achille Badeau himself and Launcelot Peake—suspicious and skeptical to downright stubbornness—have both stated that they would unhesitatingly pronounce this a genuine Rubens, provided, of course, that they were denied the right to have a look at the texture of the canvas and to make those infallible little scrapings of theirs which reveal the method employed in laying on the pigment.

I myself, less of an adept, perhaps, and not so cocksure that we know all that there is to know about genius, still maintain that the selfsame power which enabled Rubens to paint his "No. 1014" in the Louvre enabled Rafael Yglesias to paint *his*. No two men, not inspired by the same whatever it is that inspires men, could possibly produce two such absolutely interchangeable expressions of absolutely the same "inward and spiritual grace."

"Pardon me," I said after studying the picture with increasing wonder, "but that is a marvelously fine copy. May I ask if you are open to engagement as a copyist?"

My voice brought him down from the clouds, and he had to steady himself with his mahlstick to keep on his perch. He looked at me curiously before re-

plying. I fancied that he resented my advances or that he feared me for some reason, for his eyes seemed to retreat in haste to some safe solitude far in his soul, whence he could watch the invader without committing himself. But I was wrong. The smile of a little child rippled about his mouth and the very eyes came dancing out again.

"You would give me work?" he asked in excellent English, although I had spoken in French far from excellent. "God knows I need work!" As he said this, he looked down at his shabby clothes and then, with wistful incredulity, at me.

"Why, yes," I answered eagerly, visions of no end of commissions and wealth and glory for both of us filling my mind, "if you care to go to London and think that you could do a Velasquez as well as——"

"*Velasquez?*" he gasped, with a start which frightened me, it betrayed such unaccountable emotion; and this time, his mahlstick did not save him from slipping to the floor.

"You're ill?" I inquired anxiously. "I am an old fellow in this business. I know how you chaps live—starve yourselves. In your case, there is no need of it. Good heavens, dear fellow, a man who can do such work as this can command any amount of money."

"No, no!" he cried. "It's not that. I'm perfectly well. Only, when you said Velasquez——"

"Ah! I see," I replied. "Of course nobody can hope to catch Velasquez's trick of fusing solid colors so that they look like enamel—but why not have a try at it? It's the 'Adoration of the Magi' that I want. It might be worth say five hundred pounds to you, you know. Worth trying, what? The original is in the National Gallery, you know, in London. You must have learned English in England, so perhaps you know the picture as well as I do?"

"Certainly—of course," he answered, with a trace of pity, if not of contempt, for my ignorance. "I know it, every line of it. Of the one hundred and twenty-odd canvases of Velasquez in England I have seen all but seven; also the sixty miracles in the Prado in Madrid and the baker's dozen here in France. And, by the way, that portrait of Charles I., concerning which there was such a controversy and which disappeared more than half a century ago, went to America. If I ever go back home it will be in order to hunt up my King Charles."

"Back home? To America?" I asked, surprised. "Surely, you're not an American?"

"If having been born in New Orleans, of a stock that has flourished there ever since 1579, can make one an American—which, of course, it can't!—I am one. But then," he went on as he gathered up his kit and wheeled the easel, face inward, to the wall, "I'm Spanish—all Spanish—early seventeenth century—the Golden Age of the True in art. And you wish me to do the 'Adoration' for you, eh?"

"At your own price," I replied. "It's a tough feat; do you think you can accomplish it?"

He shot another of those contemptuous looks at me and then muttered: "Wait until you have seen the 'Penitent Thief,' which I have just copied, and then ask me if I think I can do the 'Magi'! Come, let us talk as we walk along."

"There is a 'Penitent Thief' by Velasquez? I was not aware of it. Where is it and to what period of his development does——"

"It is but slightly known," he answered bruskly, as if anxious to drop the subject. "What do you know about the transmigration of souls, reincarnation, heredity—that sort of thing?"

"I've read Weissmann," I laughed, wondering what he was driving at, "and one is ready to believe almost anything after learning how a trait persists through endless generations."

"Ah, that is nothing!" he retorted. "I meant the descent of genius, the reincarnation of the vital energy of a soul after the lapse of years, centuries perhaps. Do you believe in that?"

By this, we were walking slowly through the long gallery, and as we

were constantly having to separate to pass groups of visitors, and Yglesias seemed to be thinking aloud, rather than talking to me, I let him go on unanswered. I realized that I had unearthed no common treasure in this singular dreamer; such a man, better than any other that I was likely to run upon in Paris, could, I thought, fill an empty afternoon to some purpose.

All the way to the entrance he kept saying things, disconnected, vague, not altogether to the point, but meaty and just irrational enough to be fascinating. I meant to jot them all down, but did not do so. Just now I can recall only two or three.

"They talk about immortal masterpieces—and dead masters! As if there could be such a thing as a lost art-energy! Any day a fire may make a cinder of any masterpiece; the thought and inspiration that created the 'Penitent Thief' can defy the very flames of hell!"

Once in the streets, his mood changed, and presently he was chatting boyishly enough about the people and the sights. Gladly falling in with his suggestion that I go at once to his studio to look at his Velasquez, we continued our walk together and turned into the Avenue de Vaugirard. He lived, he told me, at the top of the house in the court back of the cook-shop of one Madame Dupin—anybody could direct me if I should come alone next time—and, as I should soon discover, his atelier was the cheapest, dirtiest, and most significant in all Paris.

"But why?" I asked. "I mean: Why do you hide in a garret and—and—and—pardon me—and wear such clothes and starve yourself, when you could, with a hundredth part of your talent, keep yourself in comfort?"

"Could I?" he asked, relapsing into his former abstracted mood. "I refuse to copy—anything! And as for my originals, who would stoop to buy a Velasquez even, if the master were not a dead classic, whom we are told we must worship, but a starving man actually working his miracles in some rat-hole in the Quartier Latin?"

"You honestly think, do you, that genius would stand but a poor show to be recognized to-day?"

"I know it!" he answered bitterly. "Look at this very year's Salon, visit the Luxembourg, attend any sale you like. Who are successful? Bah! But here we are. If you don't mind smells, come!"

I followed him under the arched passage into the courtyard, chuckling over the revelation his last words had brought to me. Like hosts of others whom nature had made copyists, this supremely good one refused to copy, and starved, while creating triumphs of genius, which a world dead in artistic trespasses and sins declined to recognize. Poor little devil! I saw it all now. His offering at the Salon had been rejected or "skied"; was it any wonder that, in his eyes, art had perished from off the face of the earth?

Still, I said to myself as we trudged up the five flights of stairs to his attic, ideals are ideals, and not every man is great enough to starve rather than relinquish them.

As Yglesias opened the door of his apartment a girl ran out of an inner room to meet him. She was evidently embarrassed on seeing me. She was a slip of a thing with big innocent eyes set wide apart in an oval face olive as a Sicilian's. Her dark chestnut hair hung in two long braids to below her waist.

"This is Clotilde," said Yglesias simply. "Clotilde makes my gruel, mends my clothes, puts up with my vile temper, and otherwise makes life possible and pleasant. I'd obey the Church and marry Clotilde, only the Church bids one do so-and-so, and then condones a society so monstrously unjust that one has to disobey her to realize life!"

"Just like all the rest," I said to myself; "a genius unrecognized—and a revolutionist!"

"Oh, Clotilde does not understand English," explained Yglesias when he saw that I showed surprise; and then added to her, in French: "Run down and fetch one of Madame Dupin's best chickens—broiled—a taste of salad and,

of course, celery. She shall be paid—some day, tell her."

Directly she was gone, Yglesias locked the door, looked cautiously into the inner room, and then set a rather small picture against the wall, where the light was best. It was covered with a dingy cotton cloth. He hesitated a moment, his hands trembling as he toyed with the cloth, and his face flushed as if with modesty; or was it the sudden angry remembrance of his agony of hope deferred?

"See!" he murmured reverently as he pulled the curtain aside.

I started. I had never so much as heard that Velasquez had painted a "Penitent Thief," but there could be no possible mistake about this picture. Velasquez alone could have painted it. It was no copy either, but by every external and internal mark, by every unmistakable sign, an original. I looked my surprise, not at all free from suspicion, but Rafael was bending over the picture and did not see me.

"You like it?" he asked, looking up at me with rapturous pride.

"It is superb, marvelous," I replied. "But see here, old chap, what's the game, eh? Things like this are not lying about to be picked up in any old junk-shop. How in the name of fortune did you happen to get hold of it? It might very well prove a bit difficult to account for having a Velasquez in one's possession, remember. Be frank; you'll find me white. Come now, divulge! This is a genuine Velasquez, if ever there was one."

The boy burst into a laugh.

"A genuine Velasquez—painted on *this?*" he cried, turning the painting over so that I could see the back.

I could scarcely believe my eyes. The picture was painted not on canvas, but on a slab of ordinary oak kept from warping by being inset like a panel. The wood was clearly fresh from the planing-mill; the painting must have been done very recently. Rafael Yglesias was beyond doubt the genius I had fancied he might be when I first saw him. I stood looking at the impossible thing for some time silent.

"It belongs, you see," said Yglesias, "to the master's second period."

"Yes; to the time after he had visited Italy, seen the Campo Santo, and felt the influence of Tintoretto," murmured I, still puzzling over the wonder.

"To the time, you mean," went on Rafael eagerly, "when the master had taken Truth for his mistress and bidden scornful defiance to the mawkish conventions of the romanticists. Talk about the divine power of realism, which one finds portrayed only by the courageous Prerafaelites! Just look, will you, at the infinite loyalty to truth in this thief?"

Then we fell to discussing the picture. The scene was Calvary; the moment, that in which the One on the central cross had promised salvation to the repentant robber. The bleak horror of the Place of the Skull was shown in all its naked desolation; not one of the customary "religious" details found in ecclesiastical art was to be seen.

The Christ was merely the Man of Sorrows, the infinitely compassionate victor in the conflict in which his two less fortunate brothers had suffered ignominious defeat. The Penitent Thief showed all the features of his evil life; he was just a brutal highwayman. Yet, through the agony on his hard face the light of a desperate hope was beginning to shine. Above his mass of tousled sweat-soaked hair a faint nimbus was just beginning to glimmer, as though grace hovered near, striving to penetrate the murk of despair.

After, over the little feast which Clotilde laid for us—and which, by the way, I paid for on my way past Madame Dupin's—I tried in vain to persuade Yglesias to run over to London to copy the "Adoration of the Magi." He was obdurate; not even my offer of a thousand francs cash down, as a retaining fee, and any sum he might name, when the picture was done, sufficed to move him from his curiously foolish resolve to do no copying.

"But you copied the Rubens!" I protested peevishly.

"Oh," he laughed, "that was merely to put to the test a certain theory I had

conceived. And, anyhow, I didn't do the Rubens for pay; I shall send it as a gift to Monsieur Feuardent, the curé of Sainte Eulalie-sur-Mer, in whose tumbled-down old parish church I discovered the original of my 'Penitent Thief.' If you've never been in that quaint little village in Brittany, you should go there by all means; a picturesque old place."

"I'll make it a point to go there at the very first opportunity, you may rest assured," I replied, having already determined to take the first train for Sainte Eulalie-sur-Mer, where I hoped to make a searching investigation of the mystery of the new masterpiece.

Then I bade Yglesias good-by, and did not see him again for over a month.

II.

My visit to the fishing village of Sainte Eulalie proved fruitful in results, mostly of the sort, however, that tended to deepen my perplexity. Church and State were at their deadliest strife in Sainte Eulalie-sur-Mer. The drastic Act of Separation had fallen upon the devoted fisherfolk with the shock of cataclysm. Armed with bludgeons and scythes and boat-hooks, the sturdy Bretons had resisted the gendarmes when they came to dispossess their beloved curé, but nothwithstanding their willingness to die rather than submit to the sacrilegious law, Père Feuardent was forced, after a three days' siege, to vacate his presbytery and retire to humble lodgings over a ship-chandler's little shop. The subsequent visitation of the commissioners to make an inventory of the church property was, to the simple parishioners, the abomination of desolation presaging the early end of the world. It was a page torn from the Middle Ages.

Monsieur Feuardent, a venerable old priest, gentle as a girl but of the stuff of which martyrs are made, was only too glad to talk to me freely when I told him that I came as the friend of the young painter, Rafael Yglesias. It seems that Yglesias, who had lain ill of a low fever for weeks in the priest's house, had discovered the "Penitent Thief" behind a tawdry reredos in a side chapel in the transept of the ruinous but still noble parish church, on the eve of the arrival of the infidel commissioners of the persecuting government. Naturally, the curé was careful to conceal the priceless painting until the departure of the inquisitors.

"Some day," he said sadly to me, "when these infamous atheists have gone to their doom and poor dishonored France stands forth once more adorned as the eldest daughter of our holy mother the Church, my successor may with safety expose this pious work of genius for the edification of the faithful. In the meantime, I shall expect you, sir, to observe the vow of confidence which you have made."

Like the copy which Yglesias had shown me, the original of the "Penitent Thief" was painted on an oak panel about three by four feet in size, but of course the wood was black with age and worm-eaten. In other respects also a trained eye could detect antiquity; the mellowness which only age gives to a picture, as to wine; the slight but palpable toning down of some of the colors; and that vulgar but sufficient testimony—dinginess and dirt. That it was a Velasquez was beyond question; no other master could have produced this effect of solid, firm, fused surfacing, or conceived just this treatment of the subject.

Filled with puzzled speculations as to the probable history of the "Penitent Thief" and plans for inducing Yglesias to be sensible, I returned to Paris in time to take in the sale of poor old Monseigneur le Duc de la Porte de Boisevant's porcelains and tapestries.

There I met Nathan Rothstein, whom I had not seen for several years. A suave, oily, ingratiating little old man, Rothstein embraced me effusively and asked me what was doing in our world; but for those dear preposterous swollen fortunes of expansive Americans, he declared, one might better go fishing than to try to make an honest penny now and then selling art to a Philistine public. What luck had I had lately?

I did not like the man nor some of the dubious dealings which he was believed to have carried on with gullible fellow-countrymen of mine with more ready money than discriminating taste, but, more to get rid of him than out of any interest in his affairs, I foolishly mentioned Rafael Yglesias and his phenomenal ability. As well as I can remember, Rothstein did not appear to be specially interested in what I had to say, although I believe he did ask me, in a casual way, for my protégé's address. By the next day I had forgotten meeting him.

What was my amazement, therefore, when, about three weeks later, the morning papers announced the discovery of a hitherto unknown Velasquez, and that the "Penitent Thief," the most splendid example of the genius of the master, had been sold by Monsieur Rothstein, the well-known connoisseur, to Mr. Gideon P. Botts, the recently "arrived" American multimillionaire, for the staggering sum of half a million francs. I was completely bowled over. What did it all mean?

Whatever else it might or might not mean, one thing was clear—Rothstein had smashed all records; the annals of bogus "Old Master" deals contained nothing even distantly approaching this. I alone, perhaps, in all Paris knew that a fraud of the first water had been perpetrated, for of course it was my young friend's clever copy that Rothstein had palmed off on Botts, since the original was safe enough from his itching fingers and the world's curiosity, between the mattresses on good old Father Feuardent's bed in far-away Sainte Eulalie-sur-Mer.

Still, although nobody might suspect Rothstein's trick, the bare announcement of the discovery of a new Velasquez would, I knew, stir the art world and throw Paris into a fever of discussion. And it surely did.

But what of Rafael Yglesias? I rushed off to see him. He had moved, none of the neighbors knew whither. All that any one could tell me was, that the odd fish of a painter had disappeared after his pretty little "model"—Clotilde of course—had been taken away in an ambulance to a hospital.

A tour of the hospitals resulted in my finding of Yglesias at the bedside of Clotilde, who had undergone an operation for malignant cancer. The poor fellow was too distracted with anxiety and grief to do more than agree to dine with me that evening at eight o'clock.

He came late and looking haggard and dazed. Clotilde had died soon after I left the hospital; the abyss of final despair had closed about him. Only the probability of his becoming involved in the inevitable criminal proceedings following the discovery of the fraud made me feel that I must talk the matter of the "Penitent Thief" over with him that night.

What little I could force him to eat and drink revived him somewhat, and with my first words on the subject, he became tensely interested.

Yes, he had sold his copy to a Monsieur Rothstein for a thousand francs; Clotilde must go to the hospital; they must first be married; the shadow of death throws certain things into sharper relief, you know; so he needed the money, you see, very badly.

"Two hundred dollars!" I exclaimed. "The rascal had the nerve to offer you two hundred dollars, did he? Do you know how much he got for your work? One hundred thousand dollars!"

I expected this information would distress him. As usual, however, I went wide of the mark in trying to understand the working of his singular mind. He remained perfectly unmoved and silent for a full minute before speaking.

"And they took my copy for a genuine creation of the master?" he murmured, his eyes filled with quiet triumph.

"Yes," I answered, "the afternoon papers state that Achille Badeau himself pronounces it an authentic Velasquez. But now the question is: How soon will you be ready to leave Paris with me—for Biarritz, Nice, Italy, anywhere?"

"It is no small compliment, is it, to have Badeau take one's work for that

of the master?" he mused, ignoring my question, which he, no doubt, had not heard; but I managed later to put him to bed, and the opiate the doctor gave him kept him dead to the world until late on the following day.

Assured that he would be safe asleep until noon at least, I hurried away, after an early cup of coffee, to secure the entrée to the palatial hotel leased by Mr. Botts, on the Champs Elysées. Badeau turned the trick for me with ease. I found Mr. Botts more than willing to let me see his new picture; the erstwhile soap-maker and reigning American wonder was evidently immensely elated over the notoriety caused by his last investment; and himself ushered me into the little room in which "the juiciest find ever" was enshrined.

I found several newspaper men and one or two professional critics examining the picture, so I had to wait until they had gone, before making my own investigation. The back of the picture would tell the tale; also the less apparent but equally decisive differences between the copy and the original, which I had previously carefully noted, would serve to determine the fact that Rothstein's career was nearing its end.

At last, I found myself alone, Mr. Botts having accompanied his visitors out into the hall. I sprang forward and grasped the picture and turned it over. The back was discolored with age and worm-eaten; the surface of the painting was dingy; it was not Rafael's copy at all, but the original which I had seen at Father Feuardent's!

I replaced the picture and left the house feverish with haste to set in motion the wheels of justice. A robbery, as well as an art dealer's fraud, had been committed; the next day's papers would have something worth reading!

Second thoughts, however, were for caution, so I refrained from advising the prefect of police, and contented myself with a confidential talk with Badeau and Launcelot Peake, who had rushed over to Paris the instant he read of the new Velasquez.

I packed off Yglesias by the night express for Biarritz, with instructions to await me at a village some eight leagues farther up the slopes of the Pyrenees, where he would be out of reach of the excitement which I knew must break out directly in the newspapers.

It broke out the very next day—and the war was on. Then for a week we had it hot and heavy. Badeau came out with a recantation of his offhand opinion and declared the picture a miraculously clever effort "in the style of Velasquez," but not a Velasquez. This gage being so cavalierly flung in the teeth of no end of eminent experts was eagerly snatched up and the journals of Paris, and speedily of Europe, rang with the din of battle.

Nothing else was talked about. Afternoon dandies discussed it over their absinthe under the lindens and chestnuts on the boulevards; workmen everywhere and navvies along the river had it out over their chunks of cheese and thin claret at noontime; families were divided on the issue; and ancient friendships broke under the strain of conflicting opinions as to the *"Affaire Rothstein."*

Once again all Gaul was divided into three parts: the Rothsteinards, who believed it a Velasquez; the anti-Rothsteinards, who didn't believe it was a Velasquez; and—an insignificant minority, chiefly the inmates of charitable institutions and others too old to enlist, who didn't care a sou whether it was or was not a Velasquez.

My time—the time for me to settle the matter once and forever—had not yet come. I must first run down to Brittany, see Monsieur Feuardent, apprise him of the theft of his precious treasure, get from him, if possible, some notion as to how Rothstein managed to leave Rafael's copy in the place of the original, and then return post-haste to Paris; and nothing would remain to be done but to arrest Rothstein, make Rafael Yglesias famous, and restore the "Penitent Thief" to the parish of Sainte Eulalie-sur-Mer.

Alas! The best laid plans, et cetera. Due to Achille Badeau's commanding influence, the anti-Rothsteinards increased so fast, in numbers and the un-

questioned character of their recruits, that Botts became frightened and had Rothstein arrested.

Official committees from both the Salon and the Beaux Arts were appointed to determine the question of the true character of the now simply immortal "Thief."

To make matters worse, the Foreign Minister and the American ambassador actually exchanged rather frigid notes on the burning subject, the former declaring that France would regard the exportation of the masterpiece as an unfriendly act; and the latter replying that the Washington government could not undertake to act as adviser to private American citizens in their purchases abroad.

All of which rumpus proved to be premature, for each of the expert committees pronounced against the authenticity of the "masterpiece" whose threatened sea-voyage might precipitate a state of nerves throughout France, strain diplomatic relations, and—who could deny it?—end in war.

At this juncture I realized that my time had come.

I, the one man in the world who knew the facts, must act and act at once! On the way down to Sainte Eulalie I reveled in thoughts of Badeau's chagrin, and that of all the other wise "antis" when they discovered that the Old Master, which they had glibly declared was the work of some clever copyist of to-day, had, as a matter of fact, reposed in its hiding-place behind the altar of a Breton church for heaven alone knew how long, certainly since before the erection of the altar in 1798.

My return to Paris with the copy painted by Yglesias would be in the nature of an epoch-making event. Rothstein would meet the fate of a common thief; and France rejoice in the possession of an immortal work of genius. Luckily, and just why I couldn't quite make out, the name of Rafael Yglesias had not leaked out in the raging torrent of fiery *feuilletons* and thunderous editorials appearing in every issue of every paper. I would, therefore, have the joyous distinction of first bringing him into the fame he so richly deserved.

Again, alas! I found Father Feuardent in blissful ignorance of the whole affair. He never read the newspapers, he said, and as for his flock, those who could read at all read little outside of their books of piety. I shall never forget the anguish of the old man when, after our little dinner at the inn, I ventured to apprise him of his loss. He wept.

As we hurried back to his lodgings he told me that a Monsieur Rothstein had arrived with a cordial letter of introduction from Yglesias, and that his object in coming was to see the original of the copy which he had just bought from his young friend.

"Quite so," I replied, as gently as I could, "and while pretending to admire your original the crafty fellow contrived to exchange it for the copy. But," I was quick to add, "it is only a matter of a few weeks—just time enough for the trial of the rogue—and you shall have back your picture."

"Please God!" muttered the old priest as he let me into his apartment.

We both ran to the bed and groped under the mattress for the picture. I fairly snatched it out of his hands and took it over to the lamp. I turned it over—and collapsed into a chair. It was the original! Yes, there could be no mistake; the back black with age and worm-eaten, the surface dingy.

"Did I not pray to Sainte Eulalie and the good Sainte Anne all the way as we came together from the inn, that we might find that you were mistaken?" asked the old man triumphantly, as he gloated over the picture. But I was too thoroughly bewildered to discuss the new developments that night. Early the next day I started for Paris with Father Feuardent—and the picture!

On the journey I tried to satisfy myself, no less than the priest, that Rothstein had resorted to the well-known trick of "aging" the copy, the more easily to substitute it for the original.

No end of art dealers in Europe were adepts at this lucrative trade. There was Gross of Nuremburg, for instance.

I myself had seen him "eleventh-centuryize," as he wittily called it, a brand-new carved choir-stall, worm-eating it neatly, discoloring it to a nicety, and actually producing "dry rot" in some of the Gothic finials and trefoils by treating the wood with some chemical mixture or other. Any tyro in the business will add any required number of centuries to your *objets d'art* while you wait. And Rothstein was no tyro. That he had "antiquated" the raw new copy was manifest.

Arrived in Paris, I secured first of all from the authorities a formal assurance that if I produced the original it would be restored to the present owner without delay or controversy.

Then I sprang the mine. The effect was tremendous.

The public, already sufficiently distracted, had now two mysteries on its hands, two bones of contention. The breath-taking appearance of a second Velasquez threw the country into fits of belligerent amazement. New alignments of the opposing factions had to be made; former Rothsteinards went over to the anti-Rothsteinards, and vice versa, while the puzzled experts fumed and frowned and wrangled before the two pictures now hanging, as like as two peas, in the prefecture of police. One disputed Old Master was bad enough, but two—*mon Dieu!*

Baudeau rose equal to the occasion. Backed up by Launcelot Peake, he stuck to his mature opinion that the picture sold to Mr. Botts was a copy; and staked his reputation on "the absolute genuineness" of Exhibit B, the picture we had brought from Brittany. More; before a conclave of experts he demonstrated, by sundry little borings and scrapings and tests with acids, that Exhibit A was painted on fresh wood, while Exhibit B was done on old wood.

That settled it. Little by little the factions fused into one solid and invincible phalanx of anti-Rothsteinards, while France, complacent in the knowledge that she could boast of having *the* Velasquez, withdrew all objections to Mr. Botts carrying off to America his doubtless very clever copy.

Naturally enough, Botts looked at the matter in another light. He wanted his money back; would get it, too, if it required a demonstration by American battle-ships off Calais! Also, he demanded the immediate prosecution of Rothstein on the practically proven charge of obtaining half a million francs on false pretenses.

The trial was an eruption of forensic fury and gestures impossible outside of the volcanic zone of southern Europe. After four days of ludicrously irrelevant evidence given by witnesses who knew absolutely nothing about the case, I was permitted to testify, and to everybody's astonishment, directly I had left the stand Rothstein confessed his crime.

I then ran over to London, where Mr. Wentworth was anxiously awaiting a report from me on the matter of the "Adoration of the Magi," and I got from him a carte-blanche commission to engage the services of Rafael Yglesias in copying that or any other Velasquez that I might select.

It was then that I was arrested. On returning to Paris with the detective, I learned that fiery little Maitre Goupil, of counsel for the defense, had suddenly conceived the brilliant idea that, since he could not now hope to save his client, it might be possible—many impossible things are possible in French legal proceedings—that it might be possible, I say, to implicate me in some way, and thus poor Rothstein have company in his misery.

I was haled to court and subjected to a side-splittingly funny reexamination by Monsieur Goupil. His air of mystery and importance, coupled with the fact that his ponderous tactics all ended in smoke, kept even the owllike judge convulsed.

"And now will the witness be so good as to tell me," he yelled, as he poked his purple face under my nose, "if he asks us to believe that so astute a man as Monsieur Rothstein would be guilty of the supreme folly of 'doctoring' a picture which you, monsieur, had seen in its alleged modern condition? Answer me that! Ha! Ha! Ha! The

court sees that you cannot answer me. Poof!"

Before I could retort, Rothstein leaped to his feet and all eyes were turned on him; nor did any one object to his saying whatever he wished to say.

"I'm not the donkey that you would make me out!" he cried, shaking his fist at Goupil. "This gentleman never saw the picture that I doctored. The one he saw is in this room at this moment. Come here, madame!"

A fat old lady waddled within the railing with a big flat parcel in her arms. Rothstein unwrapped it, with everybody on tiptoe and the court leaning far over the bench to see. Then Rothstein held up the picture close before me. I was staggered.

"Is this not the copy you saw?" he asked.

I took the picture in my hands and turned it over. The back was plain fresh oak, and down in the left-hand corner was the tiny X I had made with my thumb-nail. It was the "Penitent Thief" which I had first seen, and I admitted it in open court.

This last turn set public interest aflame; people began to wonder if it was going to rain "Penitent Thieves" right along, and each one capable of being accepted as the "only original"!

However, Rothstein was duly sentenced and is now serving out his time, poor old beggar! In a week or so *"Le Mystère du Larron Pénitent"* had become an old story, and the boulevards were praying for a new sensation.

Then I hurried down to the Pyrenees. Yglesias had written me that he was not feeling well, but I was not prepared to find him so ill. He had been confined to his bed for two weeks, and the local doctor advised that I send for Frissac of Paris.

He arrived on the third day, in response to my telegram, and at once gave Rafael not over a week of life.

The boy heard his doom with positive relief and begged me to send for Father Feuardent. The days of waiting for the priest were filled with torments for Rafael, who seemed to have a burden of some sort on his mind. At last, Father Feuardent arrived and they were shut up together for an hour.

Did Rafael confess that he himself had painted the "Penitent Thief"? Who knows? Father Feuardent—but his lips are sealed.

I was with the boy when he died. It was late on the following Friday afternoon. I was sitting by the bed, when he opened his eyes and stared wearily about the room. He saw me and motioned that I was to fetch the original picture, which the priest had brought with him, and to set it up at the foot of the bed. I did as he wished.

"Velasquez, not another, painted it," he murmured after looking long and wistfully at the picture, "yet it was I also."

I bent over him and smiled my acquiescence; in all sincerity I was beginning to believe that some such psychic relation existed between him and the master.

He tried to get up on his elbow, but fell back collapsed against the pillows—and I knew that the end was at hand.

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," he gasped, gazing with ineffable entreaty at the One on the central cross and then, wistfully, at the penitent thief.

"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," I quoted, thankful, as I closed his glazing eyes, that in the long ago my mother had included the King James version, no less than "Robinson Crusoe" and "The Arabian Nights," among the books a boy should get by heart.

The TRAINING of the GROOM

By GEORGE LEE BURTON



ND St. Augustine! Oh, Betty, what a lovely time you must have had!"

"It was perfect; I kept thinking of you, my dear, and your beautiful wedding-trip."

"Betty!"

"Don't look at me in that fashion, Nell; I mean its beautiful ending."

"That's better; the St. Augustine part was a dream."

"Well, Nell, are you happy?"

"Don't I look it?"

"Indeed you do; are you as happy as you look?"

"Positively radiant."

"That's encouraging; and yet at one time you talked of divorce."

"Why, Betty, I'm shocked!"

"Yes, you know you did—don't consider denying it, Nell."

"I had no grounds for divorce."

"So I told you. A man has a legal right to be absorbed in his work. By the way, how is your business machine?"

"Do you mean my husband, Betty?"

"The very same—of four months' standing."

"That doesn't describe Tom, now."

"Indeed! Has he changed then?"

"Well, perhaps a little."

"Tell me about it, dear. How did you change him?"

"I? I didn't."

"Then what caused it?"

"Absent treatment."

"What?"

"Others' treatment in my absence."

"I don't understand; do explain. You know I've been away two months."

"So you have."

"Wake up, Nell; don't get dreamy."

"Well, shortly after you left, just before Christmas, Tom told me that he would have to go to New York on business during the holidays, and asked if I did not wish to go, too. Of course I said yes, and made my plans accordingly."

"Wise girl!"

"But at the last moment Tom found he would have to be back here sooner than he had expected—important business deal—and that he would have only thirty-six hours in New York; so I decided not to go. I wished at least time to get rested before starting back."

"What a disappointment to you!"

"He seemed disappointed, too, and I know Aunt Lucinda was."

"Your Aunt Lucinda? Where did she come in?"

"Why, Aunt Lucinda had planned to go on to New York about that time to bring her infant grandson home; but when she heard I was going, she immediately approached me with the request that I act in her stead as chaperon for the infant of seven months and its faithful nurse."

"How delightful!"

"Don't, Betty; she detests traveling, you know, and assured me that all could be managed nicely. 'James'—that's her widower son-in-law, you remember—'writes that the nurse is the most competent soul you ever saw and perfectly devoted to the child. She has been with it all its life, and "You could not blow her away from the baby with dynamite," he insists. So, Nell, you will only have to glance up occasionally to see that they are there,' Aunt Lucinda said."

"That sounds easy; I believe I could chaperon, myself, under those circumstances."

"Yes, and I did feel sorry for them. You know my Cousin Alice died when the child was only two months old, and its father and his mother insisted upon keeping it with them in New York. But now the old lady thought she needed the Mediterranean trip, and decided to let the other grandmother take charge for a while."

"Naturally."

"So all made their plans accordingly, until at the last moment Tom's business engagements changed my decision. However, Aunt Lucinda did not know that the other grandmother had been depending so implicitly upon her to take charge of the infant at that exact time, and did not know that she and her son had definitely engaged passage and planned to close their house the day after we were to reach New York."

"You weren't to be her guests?"

"Oh, dear, no; Mrs. Shaw insisted that we come to her. You remember Mrs. Shaw, dear Mrs. Shaw, who gave us the dinner on our wedding-trip?"

"Don't I? She's the dearest somebody. I saw more of her than of any one when I was in New York just before Christmas—that is, of any one except Mr. Willet."

"Bob Willet? Betty, what a fraud! Raise your eyes and let me look at you. No, you're safe yet, Betty. I'm glad, for he's detestable!"

"Once you thought him rather nice, I believe?"

"That was before I met Tom. But Bob's awful. Tom saw him on this trip."

"No?"

"Yes, and yet does not absolutely hate him; but Tom's broad, you know. On this trip one of Tom's business friends took him to lunch at his club, and there they met Bob. Of course Bob was nice to him—all the men like Tom—and even offered to take him out for a drive in his car after luncheon, when the other man had to go back to his office. It was Tom's second day; he had finished his business and had three hours before the hour for his train; so he accepted. They were going through the park up toward the Metropolitan when Bob said: 'You don't enjoy pictures as your wife does, do you?' 'Why, no, I don't believe I do,' Tom answered, as if he had never thought of it before."

"Perhaps he hadn't."

"Quite likely. 'It's a mighty fine thing for a husband and wife to have some things they can enjoy together,' Bob continued in that laughing manner in which he often says perfectly serious things. 'What do you both enjoy together?' That caught Tom rather unexpectedly. 'What do we both enjoy? I don't know; let's see.' Then he sat up so straight and was silent so long that Bob laughed again."

"Did Tom tell you all this?"

"Part of it; the rest came from Mr. Willet, via Mrs. Shaw."

"What did Bob say next?"

"'How can you expect her to be happy, if you are not congenial?' Bob persisted. 'But she loves me,' Tom said. 'Certainly,' Mr. Willet responded. 'But you should use a preservative; there is a necessity for community of interests, for your enjoying things together.' 'By Jove, old man,' Tom said at last, 'I believe you're right.' You know, Tom's the best business man you ever saw, and can see clear through a proposition."

"Yes?"

"Yes. About that time they happened to see a nurse-maid, with a small infant, talking to a policeman in the park. 'Now, they,' Mr. Willet remarked, 'will make a happy couple, for they have so many tastes in common.' 'They don't seem to agree now,' Tom remarked. 'He looks stubbornly angry, and did you hear him say, "You sha'n't go?"' 'Oh, that's his commanding nature: they both glory in it. He will make her happy.'"

"The comparison seemed all in favor of the policeman."

"Exactly. Bob added: 'By the way, that's the kid your wife was to have chaperoned back, had she come. The man is usually stationed near the art-

gallery, and I've seen a good deal of him. He's quite crazy about the nurse—thinks there never was or will be another girl like her. He confided in me the plan for your wife to chaperon the maid and baby on her return trip; and when I told him that Mrs. Fletcher had mighty winning ways, to look out or she would persuade the girl to stay out there and marry her off to a Western policeman, he looked positively scared. He said last evening he certainly was glad Mrs. Fletcher had not come."

"That hardly interested Tom, except as it concerned the baby you had been on the verge of chaperoning."

"Yes, the other feature did, also. 'Yet they don't seem unusual persons; they can't have a corner on happiness. See here, why can't similarity of tastes be cultivated?' Tom asked, with all directness. 'Nell likes pictures and music as much as anything, I believe. Do you suppose I could really care for those things, too?' Mrs. Shaw reported that Bob said then he felt most sorry for him, yet admired him most. 'Could I?' Tom insisted."

"He must be rather a dear."

"Of course he is. 'Why not?' Bob replied. 'Well,' Tom answered, 'we have two hours yet; suppose you take me in here and give me a lesson in enjoying pictures.'"

"Businesslike, wasn't he?"

"Wasn't he splendid? He afterward told me that he had determined right then to study the things I liked, and to take up the business of making me happy as a side-line to the steel industry. Well, when Bob saw that he was quite in earnest, they did go into the Metropolitan for a half-hour while Bob explained."

"Explained what?"

"My dear, I was not there and cannot reproduce Mr. Willet's first lecture on the enjoyment of art."

"Was that the only developer Tom had on his trip?"

"Not by any means; but it was the first."

"The first? He was ready to start home then, was he not?"

"Almost, but he had not reached it, poor fellow!"

"Why poor fellow? Tell me about it, Nell."

"Well, Mr. Willet took Tom to his train, stopping by his hotel for his traps; Bob was having the afternoon off in his machine. But when Tom came out of the hotel, he had my telegram in his hand and was all cut up."

"Your telegram?"

"Yes; when at the very last I decided not to go, I went over and told Aunt Lucinda. She in deep disgust at once wrote to the other grandmother the state of affairs, saying that she herself would go on the following week to get the child. That letter reached New York the day Tom did; and the New York grandam immediately wired back that she had trusted implicitly to Aunt Lucinda, and all her arrangements were made to sail the following day; that her son was half sick and unable to attend to affairs; that her house would be closed the next afternoon; and ended by saying that really the situation demanded Aunt Lucinda at once—as if she could go by telegraph!"

"Pleasant!"

"I never knew how frosty a telegram could be until I read that one. Aunt Lucinda was evidently being held up to her son-in-law as unreliable and heartless, and causing them no end of trouble by her childlike confidence in her flighty young niece, alias myself. My dear aunt, rapidly dissolving into tears, was incensed at the other old lady and at me to the last degree, until finally I said that Tom could chaperon that nurse and baby as well as I could. He could get a drawing-room for them, and he himself need not see them at all, unless there was a wreck."

"The nurse was reliable?"

"Perfectly, they said. So Aunt Lucinda sat up and began to stanch her angry tears as I dwelt upon the feasibility of this suggestion, and at length began to look at me less fiercely. Whereupon I told her to telegraph at once to send the nurse and the baby to the train and Mr. Fletcher would see that they came safely."

"Wasn't this arrangement rather a surprise to him?"

"Yes, but I knew he would do anything I asked; he sometimes did not think, but he always responded. The telegram was sent; the next morning came the answer that the nurse and baby would be sent as requested; and all parties were again serene and pacified."

"And Tom knew nothing of the plan?"

"Not up to that time. I did not think it necessary to arouse him until I heard that the suggestion would be acceptable, so did not wire him until the morning of that second day. Tom was out when the telegram arrived; was at the club for luncheon, and afterward with Mr. Willet; so that he did not get the news until he was on his way to the station, and it upset him a bit."

"I should think so! What did you wire?"

"'Be sure to bring back nurse and baby for Aunt Lucinda; they will be at train. Most important. Don't disappoint us. Dear Tom, you will do this for me, won't you?

"'Ever your devoted NELL.'"

"Why, Nell; all that in a *telegram?*"

"Yes, I had to; it was a desperate case, and I could not afford to take any chances. Well, when they reached the station, there was the nurse with the baby in her arms, with a bag of traps close by; and standing at her side was that park policeman."

"To bid her good-by?"

"So Tom suggested, with a smile, to Mr. Willet; but when they got together he found he was mistaken. Do you know that big officer of the law had got frightened by the atrocious Bob Willet's suggestion of my supposedly winning ways, and would not listen to the nurse's talk of departure? And that dreadful policeman had actually coaxed her into marrying him on the way to the train, baby in her arms! He saw that they started early enough to stop at a magistrate's, and she was Mrs. Policeman when they reached the station."

"*No?*"

"Truly. Now, Betty, stop laughing; it was a tragic moment for Tom."

"Rather. What *did* they do?"

"When Bob heard the state of affairs, he literally doubled up with mirth, Tom said; but Tom is a sensible man and realized the gravity of the situation. He tried to bargain with them to get the blushing bride to make the trip out and come back again immediately, but the groom sternly objected. Tom then offered them both the trip, as a bridal-tour; but the man was afraid of being discharged from the force if he left in that summary fashion without warning. At length Tom asked Bob to take the man aside and use his influence, as a mutual friend; to reason with him; for Bob was really responsible for the predicament."

"Did Mr. Willet respond nobly?"

"Respond nobly? He was outrageous. He did take the policeman aside, but instead of allaying his fears, he doubled them, and told him it would be preposterous for a bride to desert her husband. He offered the man a hundred-dollar bill as a wedding-present if he would not allow the nurse to go. Now, Betty, if you will persist in smiling, you shall not hear another word."

"Pardon, my dear. The outcome?"

"Tom overheard Bob, and offered them two hundred dollars as a wedding-present and free transportation, if they would both take the trip out with the baby; but the policeman flatly refused—influenced, no doubt, by Bob's mysterious winks and head-shakings, the certainty of one hundred dollars from the known instead of the promised two hundred from the unknown, and the prospect of being stranded without a position in a strange place."

"Couldn't Mr. Fletcher do anything with them?"

"Not a thing. No coaxing would avail, and the train was about to start. There seemed nothing to do, and Bob kept saying: 'Take it along yourself, Fletcher; you saw Nell's message; and the poor little thing has no place here to go to.' Tom stood aghast a mo-

ment. 'I? What could I do with it?' he finally managed to say."

"What could he?"

"Bob reassured him, a little. 'Oh, it must be easy to take care of a baby; look at all the fathers you see carrying them. Nell will never forgive you, if you don't.' The train was being called, and Tom in desperation and disgust seized the child in one arm and its bag of belongings in the other, while Bob caught up Tom's traps. 'I'll go with you a little way, old fellow,' he exclaimed, with sympathetic words but a broad grin. He went just to see the fun, he afterward confided in Mrs. Shaw; and saying to the policeman over his shoulder, 'You two take my car for a bridal-tour through the park and then back to the garage, and tell them to send up word that I shall be back in a couple of days,' the mirthful artist dropped in behind Tom and the baby—the latter already jostled into yelling resentment—and passed through the gates just in time to get their train; while the nurse-maid sobbed and waved a tearful good-by to the child, upheld by her husband's strong blue-coated arm."

"Did Bob actually come West with him?"

"For quite a distance, and assured Mrs. Shaw afterward that he never enjoyed a trip more—the mean thing!"

"Didn't Bob help him nurse the infant?"

"Not he. When Tom asked him to hold it for a few minutes—it was so little that it could not sit up by itself—Bob replied: 'Really, old man, I'd like to help you, best in the world; but you know I'm not used to that sort of thing and it would get on my nerves; it would strain my muscles so that I should be unfit to paint for a month.' The idea! But Tom replied: 'I don't doubt it; I don't believe I could hold a pen steady now.' The child was only seven months old, and Tom had been trying all the time to hold up its head with two fingers. 'My fingers are about to drop off.'"

"Did they take a drawing-room?"

"No, every one on the train was taken. Tom tried to get some sympathy and help from the women in the car, but they looked upon him with suspicion."

"How?"

"'Where is the child's mother?' they asked. 'She's dead,' Tom answered solemnly, hoping to excite their pity to the point of helping him nurse a while; but they eyed him with greater disfavor than ever, for he had on a crimson scarf!"

"Go on! It's awfully interesting."

"After three-quarters of an hour of jouncing, rocking, whistling, and shooing—at which the whole car was convulsed, and Bob in the seat behind nearly went into spasms—Tom finally succeeded in getting the poor little fellow quiet. 'And with the perspiration streaming from his crimson forehead down his crimson cheeks onto his crimson scarf,' Bob said, 'he proposed again that I hold the thing while he went back for a little smoke.' 'Sorry, old man; you know I can't; but I'll go back with you and help you get your cigar lighted.'"

"Was Tom grateful?"

"I haven't yet heard that he was, but they did all three go back for the smoke. The men in the smoker were quite sympathetic until Tom suggested their holding the child for a minute, when they froze immediately and began to tell each other jokes or gaze stonily out at the fleeing landscape. Soon even the half-bliss of the smoke was interrupted by the infant becoming most uncomfortably ill from the reeking fumes in that contracted compartment. Tom had to throw away his cigar. That detestable Willet said: 'Let's take it into the day-coach, Fletcher.' As if he had had any part in taking it anywhere! 'I don't think those persons in there will stand for much more noise,' referring to those in the sleeper they had just left, who had reached peace and quiet only at the end of forty-five minutes. So they sought the day-coach. 'How I wish Nell were here!' Tom remarked, with a sigh."

"I know he did. Did he find a nurse in the day-coach?"

"Not one. At first there seemed to be an impression among the women there—due, I suppose, to Bob, but I've never been able to definitely convict or acquit him—that Tom was kidnaping the child from its mother; think of it! But after observing him for a time and seeing how unmistakably miserable he was, public opinion gradually decided that he had never voluntarily undertaken its care. When Tom thought the limit of a car's patience had been reached, he would move on to another car. Mr. Willet followed from car to car with gleeful enjoyment of the situation, as he watched Tom carrying the baby gingerly along, the most abject melancholy on both faces."

"Didn't the infant ever cheer up again?"

"Bob said it cried most of the time, and Tom did not deny it. Finally he arranged for the brakeman and newsagent to take turns in holding the child for a while at five cents a minute, they insisting however that he stay right by them. His rate of payment they considered tempting but suspicious, and they were afraid he would slip away and leave them with the baby on their hands."

"What a time he did have!"

"Yes; but about six o'clock hope dawned large, for he telegraphed on ahead for a trained nurse to meet the train. 'Emergency case; come prepared to travel; patient cannot leave train.' Then he sat back and smiled for the first time, Bob said."

"That was a good idea."

"Just like Tom; the best business man you ever saw."

"What time did this nurse arrive?"

"She was to meet the train at eight P. M. Tom grew more and more cheerful as the hour approached, and even looked triumphantly at Bob several times, the latter reported. When the train reached the station at the scheduled hour, Tom with eager eyes and baby in arms rushed to the vestibule and scanned the platform. No nurse was to be seen. He inquired and had others inquire of the trainmen, but no nurse had appeared, although he learned that his message had been delivered and one had promised to be there without fail. Just as the train was pulling away from the station, carrying Tom and the baby each in an abject state of depression, a coupé drove up and they saw a woman get out, her nurse's dress showing underneath her long wrap; but she was too late."

"How pitiful!"

"Wasn't it? Tom tried to stop the train, but could not. Even the selfish women in the car seemed to soften a little, but they did not offer to take charge. Bob said Tom was looking careworn and disheveled by this time, and that the only remark he made during the next quarter of an hour was: 'Women who take care of children certainly have a hard lot!'"

"How did they live through the night?"

"Bob waited until Tom had definitely engaged a section—declining Tom's offer to get the opposite section for him so that he could be near the baby, for Tom was getting sarcastic by that time—and then he went into another car for lodging."

"Well, the infant was not his charge."

"Yet he might have helped a little. Still it was just what was to be expected of Bob, the selfish creature! The next morning Tom looked awful, Bob said, as if he had been on a three days' spree. Tom declared he had not slept an hour, and Bob said he did not hear of any one else in that car who had. One old lady was indignant because the conductor would not put off Tom and the baby at one A. M., and a testy old man said he was going to sue the road for damages, that he was much injured as to his nerves. A traveling man remarked impersonally that they had got *his* money under false pretenses, by calling it a *sleeping*-car."

"Poor Tom! Did he hear all those things?"

"Did he? Don't you know how Bob enjoyed telling him of them as soon as he heard each one? But to Tom's great relief Bob finally left him about eight o'clock, saying: 'I'm sorry I can't go

all the way with you, old man, but hope you will enjoy the rest of your trip.' Bob told Mrs. Shaw he had intended to say more, but Tom seemed about to throw the baby at him, so he beat a hasty retreat."

"Did Mr. Fletcher get a nurse at last?"

"He telegraphed for one and she met the train at eleven A. M., but the accident prevented his seeing her."

"Accident? Was there a wreck?"

"No."

"He didn't fall off the car?"

"No."

"What *do* you mean, Nell?"

"I hate to tell this, Betty."

"Tell me, dear. What was it?"

"Have you heard from Evelyn Van Dent since you have been away?"

"No; why?"

"She'll be sure to write you, for she knows how intimate we are."

"What has she to say?"

"Oh, Betty, she was coming on here for a visit at that time, and got on Tom's train that very morning."

"Well; did she help?"

"Not she! The situation was too awkward. In fact, Tom did not recognize her when she came into the car, and she ignored him. 'He did look disreputable,' Bob insisted when he heard of it, 'and she was quite excusable.' But she's been talking so."

"What has she been telling?"

"Oh, Betty, I was mortified to the earth when I heard of it!"

"What, dear?"

"I can't bear to tell even you, Betty."

"It couldn't have been very bad. Tell me, dearest."

"My husband was arrested!"

"Impossible!"

"I thought so; but he admits it."

"What did he do, dear? Did they arrest the baby, too?"

"Not *the* baby."

"Do explain."

"About nine o'clock in the morning the poor little thing was most unhappy. Tom had neglected to get any extra milk for the child, and when the train stopped at a station he decided that the infant must have some food. Accordingly he rushed to the vestibule, learned from the conductor that they would have three minutes, and jumped off with the baby in his arms; Tom is full of energy, you know. A motherly-looking old lady from the country, with a placid unsuspicious countenance, Tom said, was bidding some one good-by as he reached the platform. 'Kindly hold the little one a moment, madam, while I get it some milk,' he said; and before she realized what he was doing, he dropped the baby into her astonished arms, which closed about it mechanically."

"Fortunate that she was there."

"I don't know that it was; wait until you hear the rest."

"Why not?"

"Tom rushed into the eating-room, but there was some delay in getting a bottle; and by the time he had got the milk, the train was actually starting. It had moved about ten feet when he reached the platform, while the motherly old lady had remained at her post; but the movement of the train had brought the steps of his car just up to a young mother, with her baby in arms, who had been talking to a friend at a window of the day-coach ahead. Tom, thinking only of making his train and not noticing that there were two babies, made a dash for the moving steps; and seizing the nearest baby as he passed and crying out, 'Thank you, madam!' he leaped onto the moving train."

"Why, Nell!"

"Yes, with the wrong baby! Evelyn said she saw it all from her window; that the mother ran along screaming frantically, and that it took two men to hold her and keep her from trying to drag herself up onto the rapidly going train by the hand-rails at a closed vestibule."

"What an experience!"

"Wasn't it terrible? Evelyn and the others who saw it were horrified, and at once began to remonstrate with Tom, who rested placid and exultant at having successfully accomplished his mission. 'Why, man, what *have* you done? Where's your other baby?' Tom

looked bewildered and said: 'Beg pardon? I don't understand.'"

"Couldn't he *see* the difference?"

"He had not taken time to notice. Then they assured him that he had the wrong child. 'Don't you see for yourself? *This* baby's face is *clean*,' Evelyn said. He began to study it closely. 'I believe it does look different,' he at length admitted, gazing ruefully down at the specimen he had abducted, 'but it cries just the same.' 'And its dress,' Evelyn pursued relentlessly, 'is not all milk-stained and sooty; it is *fresh* although it isn't fine.' At that Tom appeared still more anxious and remarked: 'I believe it does seem fresher, but where's the other? Who changed them?' Then they told him how it happened."

"What did he do?"

"Got excited and commanded the conductor to stop and back the train, Evelyn declared. The whole car was excited, for that matter. Tom thought over the state of affairs considerably during the next ten minutes, and commenced to write a long telegram asking the county judge of the county where the last stop had been made to send on the left-over baby with a reliable person by the next train, and planned to drop this one at the next stop, with proper directions to send it carefully back to its mother. He had this business appointment, and felt that he himself could not possibly stop off."

"Did he carry out his program?"

"Ah, me, no. The train was flagged a few minutes later, at a little station near the county-seat, and a deputy sheriff came on board for Tom and the newly acquired. It seems the young mother was a cousin of the sheriff, and the telephone prevented any loss of time after the catastrophe. Tom told the deputy to take the baby, that he did not want it, but that he himself could not go; a most important business engagement absolutely demanded his going on. However, he found that the deputy considered other things besides Tom's business, and as the officer dangled handcuffs and fingered his pistol he asked Tom if he had not better go quietly."

"Which Tom did?"

"Quite promptly; he saw it was best. You should hear Evelyn describe it: no, you shouldn't, for I'm sure she greatly exaggerates. In the shortest imaginable time Tom and the crying baby and their traps were all on the platform with the deputy, watching the train whisk away. Evelyn says it was the only time she ever wished to be a man, so that she could have accompanied them; but not as a helping friend, I fancy."

"What became of them?"

"They waited an hour and then took a freight-train back to the place of the abduction, where apparently hundreds of persons had gathered to greet them. There was a scene, of course, when the mother recovered her little one and the grimy infant was restored to Tom. It seems they had preferred letting it sleep to attempting to freshen it and its attire. Then they took Tom before some sort of a judge; fined him heavily, and gave him until the next train to take himself and the original baby out of the place, saying that it should not become a charge upon *that* community. Tom was thoroughly aroused, but nothing he said seemed to do any good; everybody seemed indignant, except a crowd of jeering little boys, who followed him back to the station and cheered him as he finally boarded his train."

"So he came on as soon as he could?"

"Now that's an utterly superfluous question, Betty."

"But he failed to have that desired business meeting?"

"No, time was an important factor in the matter and Tom is a persistent soul. He wired those men and had them come on to meet him. Then when they got half-way and their trains met, they took possession of the smoker in Tom's coach, baby and all, and discussed their business at the appointed time, though not at the first appointed place."

"The baby presided?"

"Yes, 'Guttersnipes,' the men nick-

named him, on account of his unwashed appearance. Tom did not care what they said about the infant, so long as it did not cry. He would not let the men smoke; but despite his efforts the youngster, not having the same interest in the proposition that its elders had, soon set up a yell, and finally Tom had to resort to the brakeman again."

"The baby was still alive when they reached home?"

"Yes, but both it and Tom were rather wilted."

"I can imagine. Have they recovered?"

"They say the baby is quite normal now, but Tom is a changed man. That experience was most severe. You know he always was devoted, but absorbed; now he has some thought for other things than business outside of business hours."

"I congratulate you. Has he become musical yet?"

"Not entirely; but he is making progress."

"How?"

"In enjoying music. He got a piano-player soon after his return, and asked me to help him select the music. He has learned to enjoy some things already; he studies music with my aid as if it were a new steel-bridge proposition. He has possibilities."

"He is really making progress?"

"He really is, though his musical knowledge is still a trifle crude; he is not yet letter-perfect. Mrs. Shaw has just spent ten days with us, and he asked her one evening if she did not think the 'Evening Star' the most beautiful of Chopin's Nocturnes. Now, Betty, stop smiling; let me do that."

"Yes, dear; what did she say?"

"'I've always enjoyed the "Evening Star," but I am very fond of Chopin's "Nocturne in G minor."' Still he is learning."

"Poor groom!"

"Betty!"

"Beg pardon; but I imagine that every man must sometimes, just for a little while, long for his old freedom; and I know he must when he is being developed."

"You atrocious wretch! But, Betty, I imagine so, too; and I see that he is not always on the rack."

"Wise matron!"

"And perhaps I'm adapting somewhat myself."

"You? How?"

"I have taken up the study of steel, make trips to the works, read up on the subject, and take a trade journal. When I don't understand things, Tom explains; you should see how surprised and delighted he is at my taking an interest in his work and being intelligent enough to understand."

"*You* a student of the manufacture of steel?"

"Why not? It is really very interesting to get in touch with business life and the manufacture of things, though of course it takes intelligence."

"That sounds arrogant. I suppose your small talk now when you two are alone is all about market quotations and the output?"

"No, it is *not*, and you are insufferable. Of course Tom does not talk business all the time, and I should not let him if he wished to do so; but he seems so relieved and so much freer from care because he can talk things over at home with a chum who is interested and can understand."

"So your hearts are grappled together with 'hooks of steel'?"

"Betty!"

"Have you and your Tom no other tastes in common?"

"Oh, yes, many; and we find more possibilities every day."

"But, Nell, won't you both tire of this adaptation?"

"Ah, Betty, you don't know anything about love. Tom is so fine. When he brought me some violets last evening, he kissed me, tenderly and reverently, and said: 'I loved you before I fully knew your beautiful spirit, dear'—looking down into my eyes as only Tom can look—'but now, I adore you, Nell!'"

AN INTRODUCTION

By Camillus Phillips

THE duke, in a series of regular hitchings, elevated his right eyebrow. As, futile in their black simulation of unfaded youth, the scanty hairs rose, the features of the handsome woman facing him became downcast. It would have been a hurting thing, to any man with an eye in his head for beauty or a heart in his breast for loveliness in dole, to see how the rosy, flushing eagerness paled and left renascent, hopeful girlhood again the woman, wry in her apprehension of fresh disappointment.

"Lucille," said the duke, "if my recollection of the Scarbannon family records does not belie you, you honored my lamented brother and his equally lamented wife, and this wholly lamentable world, with your presence some twenty-five years ago. You honored me with your society ten years later; and you withdrew your distinguished patronage from my poor hospitality when you were twenty-two. During these years, you have disregarded many plans which I made for your welfare, and I have acquiesced in many others which you contrived for yourself. This new rigmarole——"

"But, uncle," she interjected, as if in desperate sally upon a heart-breaking antagonist, "this is just the plan which will relieve you of me forever. Only let me show you how certain it is to make me independent. I know you will approve."

The eyebrow dropped, and the duke's features assumed the rapt look of one who harkens to sweet strains.

"Whenever I hear your low and cadenced tones," he commented, "I deplore the national tendency toward American wives and peacock shrillings. And when I wrench myself from the Euterpean trance to analyze your meaning, I wish to heaven you could barter that vox humana stop of yours for a few notes of their raucous common sense." The eyebrow was rising, in slow jerkiness. "When you were seventeen I gave Captain Ashburton my leave to marry you."

She said nothing; but two admirably modeled hands joined themselves, in a sympathy of resignation, on her knee.

"In rapid succession," continued the duke, "I offered similar opportunities to Colonel Helmswood——"

"An old satyr!" she interpolated, as one wards a familiar lunge with its appointed parry.

"To Lord Trevisleigh——"

"A young rake!"

"To Admiral Castlewain——"

"A well-born boor!"

"To Mr. Trupp——"

"A boor who merely occurred, and grew rich."

"Well, to the Bishop of Reckissgowan——"

She laughed, with such a splendid, round, delicious laugh that it was almost a sobbing gasp, in which she checked herself at sight of the thin hairs in apogee. The duke, with the short barkings of an outworn patience, flung at her:

"And then I had to bear the whole

expense of presentation and of your subsequent career as the Honorable Miss Scarbannon. Oh, madam, beyond question, it was an amusing thing to you to order gowns and move resplendent, the difficult desire of all, flaunting the bloom of your beauty through season after season, while I signed checks to tradespeople who doubled my expenses."

"I am sure," said his niece, with a constrained humility, "that I did credit to you and to our name."

"Credit! Yes, it was all credit, with no sign or promise of ever settling. Good Lord of the orphans! If I drove one lover to—yes, to the Circean trough—I herded a hundred. The Marquis of Whims, Sir Ellis Balmondesley, Baron Flerscourt, Count Ditti, MacKupper the Scotch millionaire, Donegan, with the best estate in Ireland, Prince Rabiskoff, Mahmoud Bey the Turkish governor, Kio Yama of the Japanese Embassy, Metchdall of Australia——"

"Yes—his grandfather was one of the first settlers, warden or convict, or something of the kind. I must acknowledge, uncle, I thought at the time you were doing more than your duty; for, while half of them were asking your permission to speak to me, the others were asking mine to speak to you."

"And of them all"—he might have been passing final sentence—"there was not one who could suit your finicky taste."

"It is true." She looked him full in the eye; and there was that in her gaze which checked the sneering self-righteousness of his air. "There was not one among them who did not want me for the sake of the alliance with the Duke of Scarbannon, or for the glory of winning a famous belle, or for the proprietorship of a beauty which they could secure only by marriage—except some few poor fellows who loved me in the good, old-fashioned way and had to be rejected because I could not love them. Honestly, uncle"—she spoke with a sincerity that shore her words of much of their sharpness—"to relieve you of a burden which irked you so harshly, I should have accepted the first man among them for whom I could have mustered even a friendly tenderness. And, in the end, when I saw I was trying your patience beyond its limit, did I not undertake to support myself—and have I not done it, ever since?"

"If you can call it supporting yourself when you trade on the Scarbannon name to sell social introductions to any nobody who can afford the extravagance, perhaps you have. But, whenever some American lamplighter or canonized bond-stealer needs presentation at Court for his gewgawed wife or chatterbox daughters, or when he is tuft-hunting on his own hook, you draw on me as though I were some limitless bank-account. And I don't know how many pounds you've collected in the three years of your partnership with Lady Tralves."

"And I don't know how many guineas you have collected from the men who paid me in pounds. It was a mutual arrangement; it was your suggestion. Do you wish me to pay you a commission?"

The duke ignored the bitterness in her tone as only a man of the early Victorian era can ignore an affront. Indeed, his right eye narrowed under the lowering brow as had been its wont when, removing the monocle he wore in fashionable disguise of youth's excellent sight, he discerned some shrewd advantage to himself in any bickering. The glass was gone now, with the clarity of his vision, for in age Scarbannon treasured the remnants of appearance his years had left him. But the hall-mark of his cunning was unchanged.

"Considering the years of lavish expenditure to which your perverseness subjected me," he remarked, "I am free to say that some dividend, at least, is due me from the capital I so richly furnish to your social enterprises—for you cannot pretend that the cachet of my indorsement, upon your remunerative friends, is a dispensible asset. Practically, this industry, as conducted by you and Lady Tralves, is a commercial

venture into which you either blackmail me for moral support and active aid, or admit me in the capacity of silent partner. The venture has had its risks; and I, nolens volens, have been precipitated into them. In this partnership, gains and losses should alike be shared."

The lovely face that lay open to the calculation of his narrowed eyes looked troubled, while two rounded yet delicate fingers fumbled with the clasp of the silver portemonnaie she wore.

"Very well, uncle," she acceded. "It is a partnership, then, with gains and losses shared equally. Shall we consider this settlement day?"

"Oh, not to inconvenience you!" in polite disclaimer. "Perhaps we should first determine the rate of dividend. I think I should be very moderate in asking—say—ten per cent. of the net earnings, as your accounts stand to date."

The Honorable Miss Scarbannon opened the silver purse and shook it into her lap. A sovereign and some smaller pieces emerged. She selected, with care, three shillings, which she handed to the duke with a square of paper she drew from the purse. He regarded the paper like a man encountering some member of a disliked family.

"This, Lucille—this—is a modiste's 'Kindly remit' notice, on an account of three hundred pounds."

"Yes, uncle. The cash assets of the partnership, on settling day, afford you a dividend of three shillings, which you have in hand. The pressing liabilities—the only liability—is that outstanding bill. I will take your check for thirty pounds, uncle."

A white wrath began to pale the duke's features.

"Do you dare bring me your dressmaker's bills again? You impert——"

But she had risen, and she swerved to him from his desk with his checkbook in her hand.

"I have heard it said," she observed, quietly, "that Scarbannon was the hardest loser in England. But I never knew him to be accused of welching."

The duke turned up to her two basilisk eyes; then rose and, taking the book, went to the desk and wrote his check for thirty pounds.

"Good day, Miss Scarbannon!" he said grimly.

She seated herself and smiled pleasantly, while she folded neatly the check and the bill and put them in her portemonnaie.

"You may sit, uncle," she vouchsafed, with a little, gracious gesture.

"You minx—do you want me to order you out?" There was something almost menacing in the look as well as the tone of the old man.

She met him with a gaze as hard as his own; but she spoke with an inflection smooth as a rapier:

"I desire you to be seated, sir. People of our station observe the decencies of life. I came to you to offer a business arrangement which would be profitable to you. You tried to extort from me a few pitiful pounds, and have yourself been mulcted. Any tradesman would respect the shrewdness that took him in. Do you wish me to go without affording you the opportunity to take secure profits, instead of sharing such losses as you have just now insisted upon?"

The duke's countenance swiftly ameliorated. He resumed his chair and affected a resignation to the inevitable of womankind. His niece, as quickly, became her eager, animated self.

"Briefly, uncle, Mr. Woffton, whose social ambitions you aided, at my request, six months ago, has consented to risk twenty thousand pounds in my venture. Over my name—over my name alone—we will open, in Pall Mall or some other excellent location, a shop for the sale of perfectly pure milk, so pure that our patrons shall drink it, if they wish, as it is drawn from the cow. From morning until night, a charmingly pretty dairymaid, in an equally charming costume, will milk our cows in a bit of green England set down in the very heart of London. I will solicit the nursery patronage of my personal friends. Within a year, the Honorable Miss Scarbannon will supply milk to every occupied nursery of the peerage;

she will control the milk trade of London—and she will be able, out of her plenty, to give a dole of life, fresh from its fountains, to hundreds of poor little starvelings who are perishing all about us because no one remembers that they need food every day and not merely some charity chalk and water stinted to them once a week."

She paused; and her gaze clouded as though at sight of some saddening vision. But she seemed to put upon herself a rein, such as one needs with those whose patience is short.

"We offer to you, uncle," she continued, "an advance of ten per cent. upon existing charges for the use of such grain and grazing-lands of yours as we shall require for our herds, the advanced rates being in consideration of our right to use the Scarbannon device as our trade device. We ask of you that, at any time of the day which may suit your convenience while you are in London, you stop in at the dairy, drink a glass of our milk, pay for it, and so pass on. The tuppences you pay will be returned to you at the end of the business year, and you will be paid ten per cent. of the net profits of the enterprise if those net profits go beyond five thousand pounds. If they be less, we will pay you, whatever the profit or the loss, five hundred pounds for the honor of your patronage."

The duke exploded, with every upward hitch of the sparse eyebrow.

"My stomach—my sacred, cherished stomach, for a contemptible five hundred pounds!"

"You have been taking your brandy in milk for the past five years."

"Have you had Scotland Yard on me? Scarbannon, wet-nurse to his Bratship the Marquis of Whitechapel!"

"Scarbannon," she retorted steadily, "giving charity to the poor and receiving ten per cent. on his philanthropy."

"'Ah, Scarbannon,'" he quoted, "'how're your deuced old purple cows this morning?'"

"'God bless the duke!'" she rejoined, "is what they will say in Whitechapel, as they used to say of Her Majesty, Victoria."

"Lucille"—with a flare of quick anger—"these tricks of trade are not your own. They are too bizarre, too American, for even you to originate. There is about them something intimately vulgar, something which could be contrived only by a cockney grocer adapting Yankee tricks to British notions."

"The idea," she fought back stanchly, "is my own—all of it, from the dairy in Pall Mall to the patronage of the nobility and the charity to the poor little creatures who need it so hungrily. Mr. Woffton made his investment conditional upon your open and definite indorsement of the enterprise. But there is nothing about it which is less dignified than the trade ventures of many women of my standing and of many men of your rank. It is at least honest; and its dignity depends purely upon its magnitude. Uncle, if I am not to do something desperate, something of which the notoriety will embarrass you more than this endeavor to be a self-supporting dairywoman, I must escape from the horror of my present mode of life. This venture I could be happy in. You cannot sympathize with it; but I hunger and thirst for the touch and the voices of the babies. Oh, if I could only bring myself to marry without love—if I could have one child of my very own! Uncle, I am not perverse or self-willed. I am only an honest woman, longing for the baby hands and the baby kisses that are every woman's right; but I am so little like this world which you and Lady Tralves create about me that, unless the man who is my husband is the man for whom I would gladly go down into the depths of wretchedness, the touch of his hand would revolt me and the kisses of his lips sear me. And so I, the beautiful Miss Scarbannon as you have called me, seem born to be no man's wife, and no child's mother. Well, then, let me be foster-mother to the thousands. It is a calling the queen herself could well adopt."

"But not His Grace of Scarbannon," said the duke, with emphasis. "This ends it, Lucille. I am ever ready to increase my income. But five million

pounds annually could not requite me for the derision of my associates. As for your domestic preferences, marry this person Woffton. You have my consent."

"Mr. Woffton," returned his niece, "has not had the effrontery to ask me. And if he should——" She inclined her lovely head toward the window. "Why, uncle, I would rather marry that young man across the street, who has been keeping watch on the house ever since I entered it."

The duke rose, with a nimbleness surprising at his age.

"Ah—yes, a very fine-looking young man, very fine-looking. Clerk, out on a holiday, no doubt."

"Nothing of the kind, uncle!" Miss Scarbannon exclaimed, vehement in protest. "You know perfectly well you cannot distinguish the features of any one at that distance. He has an unmistakable air of breeding. And he is most discreet and considerate. He followed me, some months ago, for three weeks continually, until I went to the Continent. And since my return, he has scarcely left me out of his sight. But not once has he presumed, not once has he gone beyond the bounds of respectful, distant admiration."

The duke swung around upon her, his narrowing eye agleam with a reviving hope:

"Lucille, do not deny it; you are interested in that young man."

"I am interested," she rejoined composedly, "as I have been interested in many who paid me the priceless tribute of a sincere and honorable love. And I am the more interested in him because he, of all who seemed to care for me, has been most diffident and most faithful."

"My child"—the duke's brisk animation gave quaint lie to the endearing phrase—"you have my consent. Marry him."

"Uncle"—she spoke with a little catch in her voice, the strangle of revolt a woman feels when she is denied the last vestige of the regard she craves—"I believe, if a costermonger should propose to relieve you of the shadow of responsibility you feel for me, you would reiterate: 'You have my consent.'"

Scarbannon observed her thoughtfully, silently, for an instant; and the eyebrow eloquently rose.

"H'm!" he muttered, in grave consideration; then indulgently: "Well, Lucille, whenever you are prepared——"

She hurried past him, her lips twitching and the lids fluttering over her great eyes, to shut back the tears.

Lady Tralves laid on the desk, beside the duke's check indorsed to the modiste, an envelope from which a Bank of England note, studiously exposed, showed the denomination of one thousand pounds. With it, she laid a card, bearing the name, Edwin Hillegas.

"And, Lucille," she urged, "as soon as you can get the smaller notes, do let me have my four hundred. I am wild for money."

Miss Scarbannon began to laugh; stopped, choked a little, and began to cry; stopped again, and laughed more heartily than before; choked, and tried to laugh and cry at the same time. Lady Tralves, calmly efficient, closed the door tightly, took her case of hysteria into vigorous control and, at the first brief interval, shot in the announcement:

"He is waiting, in the drawing-room."

Miss Scarbannon laughed, choked; cried, choked; gasped, subsided into sobs; sat silent for a moment, and demanded, with all proper irritation:

"Who is waiting—and for what?"

"This Mr. Hillegas—for his introduction. He came a few moments after your return."

Miss Scarbannon picked up the envelope with its protruding treasure, and handed it to Lady Tralves.

"Give it to him," she said contemptuously. "And tell him to go away."

Lady Tralves became very white at the lips; and the hand that held the envelope trembled. But she spoke with

a sternness which gained authority from her tall and bony figure:

"I cannot permit any more of this nonsense, Lucille. You are wearing out my very soul with your hysteria and rebellions. Has the duke consented, that you are so eager to dispense with me?"

"Yes," answered Miss Scarbannon bitterly. "He has consented to my marriage with the first costermonger I can engage to fling me down-stairs of a Saturday night. Oh, the shame of such a relative! Harriet"—her eyes commenced to glow with the heat of her revolt—"the duke will not hear of my dairy; and Mr. Woffton will not risk one of his tinned-meat pennies without him. I think my uncle is the most short-sighted, as well as the meanest peer in the United Kingdom. I am utterly without resources, for I am only now sending to my modiste, on account, thirty pounds I could not refrain from extracting from him, if only for the joy of playing *Portia* to his check-book. But I am done with this ignominy of ours. I shall secure some employment. If it pay me no more than ten shillings per week, I shall recover my self-respect."

"You can recover your self-respect much more effectively next week than you can to-day, Lucille," observed Lady Tralves, with a prosiness in her voice that was like a dash of cold water. "Your three years of touting for our nouveaux riches can be far more effectively expunged with bank-notes than with rags. Have we ever had the chance at such a killing as this Mr. Hillegas promises? The man appears to be helpless without us. He is an American connected with vast corporate interests, evidently as wholly lacking in influences here as he is overwhelmed with wealth. I had no opportunity this morning, with you in such haste to be gone, to explain fully. But I knew, the instant I saw him, last night, that he must have been planning his course for a long, long time. His insistence that he desired only to speak with you, his anxiety when I held off, his reticence as to his mission, his immediate doubling of his offer of five hundred pounds for the introduction, his declaration that he would pay no more than a thousand—every one of these things shows that he has completed an investigation of our relations with each other and of our social resources, such as these Yankees make when they contemplate some immense undertaking. Lucille, it is not a thousand pounds you are bidding me return to the person in the drawing-room. It is ten thousand—twenty thousand pounds. He is not trying to obtain a social footing. He has some huge, secret trade undertaking for which the assistance of Scarbannon is an essential. His thousand pounds is merely my preliminary *douceur*. There will be twenty thousand offered to you, a hundred thousand to the duke and his powerful friends. With your two-thirds invested at only three per cent., you will have an income which will insure you against want. Shall I tell him to go away, Lucille?"

Her tones had sunk until they were almost pleading. The girl opposite looked at her pityingly, as she replied:

"Harriet—I—I am afraid I cannot make you understand; and it is so hard for me to be firm—so hard! I know what a godsend eight thousand pounds would be to you, just now—I know what twelve thousand would be to me. And I believe your surmise is justified. But oh, if you could feel the sensation of restored, honorable pride which I have enjoyed during this short hour after my resolve to end our connection, you would acquit me of heartlessness and ingratitude. I do owe you much, for your protection was a very vital thing to me when my uncle's parsimony made life under his roof no longer endurable; and this means of livelihood, which you have afforded me, was at least the best you had to give, however largely I have contributed to our success. But, Harriet, henceforth, the Honorable Miss Scarbannon will bear the modest prefix, to which her birth entitles her, in literal worthiness. You can tell this American promoter to take his money and go away."

Lady Tralves put the envelope back on the desk, and rose.

"I shall tell him, Lucille, that you will be with us shortly. As soon," she added, "as you can bathe your eyes and let them do justice to you."

"Lady Tralves!" exclaimed Miss Scarbannon.

"Miss Scarbannon," rejoined Lady Tralves, "all that I have said regarding the commercial aspects of this introduction is, I am convinced, correct. But I am prepared, as your friend and as your protectress, to assume the responsibility of the introduction purely for its social features; and if, afterward, you tell me my action has been displeasing to you, I will hold myself accountable."

"Then, Harriet, it is some one——"

"It is some one of whom I know no more than you. Yet I think you will not regret the quarter of an hour for which he stipulated."

Lady Tralves smiled at the vivacity with which the curiosity she had aroused drove her rebel to the mirror. She debated at the door, and risked a return and the appeal of her hand on Lucille's arm:

"Oh, my dear," she implored, "if this is to be the last, for my sake don't let it be a shilling lower than twenty thousand!"

"You are deceiving me! It *is* altogether mercenary, then!"

But Lady Tralves was already beyond the threshold; and, through the carefully opened doors a little later, Lucille could hear her emphatically upraised voice:

"Miss Scarbannon will be here directly."

Even until Lady Tralves made her transparent excuses, Miss Scarbannon's cheeks retained the delicate flush which mantled them at sight of Mr. Hillegas —a flush that, several years previously, it had pleased royalty to honor with the fortieth annual repetition of the admired phrase, "an azalea pink." Débutantes who blushed to an azalea pink under the frankly appreciative scrutiny of royalty, even in the callow days of gray-bearded princedom, were esteemed more highly than those who won the more florid tributes of blush-rose and lily pale, which were also in the royal repertoire.

The azalea tint was slow to fade, even while Miss Scarbannon's mind was doubly occupied with making conversation and with observing, at near vantage, the rare contrast between features that evidenced the full maturity of an unusually keen mind and an exceptionally resolute will, and the expression of youthful candor and an eager zest of life which, at intervals, irradiated them with the charm of an impetuous boy. For all his assured ease of manner, for all his obvious experience of men and affairs, there was, beneath his unobtrusive repression, an ardent, passionate quaffing of the pleasure in mere existence which made her wonder whether, in reality, he could be older than she.

And their talk? It was of places—of Dieppe, of Cairo, of the Riviera, of Carlsbad—of anything under the sun except of the purpose of his interview. It appeared that he had visited nearly every spot on the continent which had held Lucille and the gay, erratic party of travelers whose guest she had been; and some chance had always brought him after their departure.

As the time passed, he glanced at the clock beyond her; and he appeared both relieved and appalled as he noted the passage of the minutes. His anxiety affected her. Would he never cease polite conversation, and bring his courage, and his errand, to the point?

Seemingly, he never would, for, upon another glance at the clock and a slow, full, long gaze upon her face, he arose.

"I have been most fortunate," he said. "I expected Lady Tralves to return. May I ask you to give her my thanks—my very sincere thanks?"

Lucille had risen, in a mechanical compliance with his suggestion of departure. But the mystery of his lavish fee to Lady Tralves and of his utterly purposeless interview with herself held her curiosity in thrall. And the abundant decisiveness of his character,

which showed in every movement of his lean, strong body and in every line of his clean, strong countenance, with the boyish, ingenuous frankness that greeted her in every glance of his eye—how could she reconcile them with such a timid vacillation as some yokel might show in applying for the renewal of his leasehold? The affair, she felt, verged on farce; she had an uneasy sense of being the object of some queer caprice or humor. It was like her to resume her chair, and say quietly:

"Do not go, yet. You have something more to say to me, have you not?"

"Nothing," he answered. "Except, if you permit me, to thank you for your indulgence even more than I can thank Lady Tralves for her kindness in letting me enjoy it. I am afraid I am trespassing. I should tell you that Lady Tralves has granted me only a quarter of an hour."

He stood, awaiting her leave to depart. But Lucille was in no mood to remain mystified. There was a tinge of grave imperiousness in her voice as she bade him sit; and there was a dignified protest in her tones, as she added:

"Mr. Hillegas, I have met many Americans. I cannot say that I have been obtuse in the presence of the elusive American joke. Nor can I reconcile your appearance or your breeding with the belief that you presume to perpetrate upon me some witticism I fail to appreciate."

"Oh, Miss Scarbannon!"

The note of acute distress in his hurried disclaimer was convincing enough. It left her all the more mystified. She grasped the nettling situation boldly:

"Well, then, what is it you wish? I know all the circumstances attending your visit. I have seen you, watching me surreptitiously, for weeks and months past. I have seen a Bank of England note, for one thousand pounds, which you paid to Lady Tralves for this brief, inconsequent chat with me. Now, what is it you wish to say?"

For a space, the visitor remained silent. Then:

"Since Lady Tralves has chosen to inform you of the inducement which persuaded her to aid me, I can only acknowledge that the interview you have granted, Miss Scarbannon, was obtained upon a purely business basis. For one thousand pounds, I was to be introduced to you and permitted to speak with you for a few moments. The agreement—one, I believe, not unusual in England at present—has been carried out. So far from presuming upon your goodness to me, I expect to claim no future recognition of the acquaintance which, brief as it is, lays me under deep obligation to Lady Tralves."

Lucille contemplated, with a silent despair, this amazing obstinacy in diffidence. She cast about, among her mental resources, for the instrument which should pierce this punctiliousness of trade. She found it—and with it used one of her blinding smiles, enhanced with just a hint of that azalea flush which so pleased her king and ravished his faithful subjects.

"Mr. Hillegas," she told him, "let your bargain with Lady Tralves retire to the limbo of mean trade. Let our acquaintance commence anew, upon the social ground alone. It is really a pleasure for me to know you, as it is really now a pain to be in ignorance of your reasons for wishing to speak with me. Whatever they are, I have the right to know them; whatever they are, I give you the right to tell me."

Her visitor seemed to struggle with a temptation, and barely to overcome it.

"No, no, Miss Scarbannon!" he exclaimed. "You do not understand. I cannot take advantage of a generosity which, by its very greatness, forbids its abuse. Please let me go. Rest satisfied that you have already given a charity to a man whose impertinence warrants your rebuke."

But Lucille only looked him full in the eyes, while she said, in her deep, persuasive voice:

"Tell me, now."

The boy—the eager, impetuous, passionate boy in him—leaped into dominant life. He looked the heir of the

whole, young continent that gave him birth—as though he were, incarnate, its genius of longing and aspiration.

"Ah, forgive me, then!" he said to her. "But I came to Europe as many Americans come—without introductions, with nothing more than the letters of credit that are so easy to procure when one has the mere money. And I asked nothing of this Old World except that it let me gaze upon it for a modest summer—until I must go back to my work with the memories it should give. One night, as I passed on foot along the streets, living a hundred lives in every flying minute, I came upon some splendid reception, where the guests, as they entered, were stared at by scores of London's envious poor. It was the house of Lady Terne. I joined the poor. I contributed my stare and —let me confess it—my modest mite of envy. And then, you came. Oh, if you could know the joy and the anguish that sprang, twined, in my breast at sight of you, you would not feel anger at this presumption of mine; you would condone the insolence that has dogged you everywhere, while you were in London, from that night until to-day; you would not resent that long pursuit all over the Continent, made in the vain hope that, by a happy chance, I might sit near you at some theater or walk past you on some boulevard, and punished with never a glimpse of your dear face. I learned everything the world of chance can tell of you to discreet questioning. I learned your rank; I learned how all England rated your marvelous beauty; I learned of the scores who, whatever their position or their wealth, were not found worthy of your love. It would have been madness for me to think of winning you. But I knew that, for all my life to come, I must live upon the sweet remembrance of your face. At length, when my work at home called upon me imperatively to return, I engaged my cabin. And only then, at almost the last hour, did I learn that Lady Tralves might consent to let me bear away the memory of your voice and, perhaps, the touch of your hand.

"Can you forgive me for profaning you by the bargain I made with her?" But there was no reply; and he said: "Don't try; I have no claim upon your magnanimity. But, oh, if ever you should feel that life has betrayed you, if ever sorrow or disappointment come to you, you can know that to one other human creature you have given an eternal happiness, and an inspiration that can die only with the man it blesses."

The heart of Lucille Scarbannon, and the soul of Lucille Scarbannon, during the rushing on of this love, that seemed to envelop her in a flame which she could not choose to escape, had waged a sudden, desperate conflict. After her years of adulation, after her disregard of the love of men, after her own yearnings and her whole, intimate analysis of the love she desired and would expect to give, she was conscious only of one brief ecstasy of joy, and of the swift, poignant suffering which told her she must forego it. Where other women reach the heights of love after years of devotion, Lucille, at the instant of its birth, beheld herself pledged to the chill, yet lofty, heritage of abnegation. Once, only once, she glanced at him, after he ceased speaking. But he saw that her eyes were brimmed with tears; and he saw that her curved, perfect lips were tense in the misery of her self-restraint.

"It costs me very dearly—ah, so dearly!" she said to him. "But you are not the man a woman of my kind can allow to ruin his career, his happiness and, it may be, the happiness of others. The man who loves as you love now, as you can love in the future, has the right to possess the reality for his ideal. You do not love me; you love a daze of your vision that surprised you one summer night in your chosen city of enchantment. Let me, in justice to this beautiful love of yours, tell you the truth of the wretched thing its splendor aureoles with so blinding a radiance. I am the penniless niece of the most penurious, contemptible peer in England. For three years I have been the vilely mercenary partner of Lady Tralves in

the vulgar trade of selling introductions, such as this which you have so shamedly bought, to persons whom I despise almost as much as I can respect you. The money I gain is partly wasted in maintaining the illusion—which deceives only the omniscient journalists who chronicle my social activities—that the Duke of Scarbannon approves of my independence by supporting me; and it is partly filched from me by women who make their bridge-tables a pretext for procuring their tithes—their price for accepting the introductions. The very Bank of England note you paid to Lady Tralves lies now upon my desk, awaiting conversion into currency which we two harpies can divide. And I should take the larger share, for I, not Lady Tralves, am the real pawnbroker of the hospitality of my friends. I am the sportsman in this ignoble poaching upon decency; she is merely the flusher of my game. Not three hours have elapsed since my uncle refused to approve of the milk shop I planned as an avenue to freedom from my degradation. Not half an hour has passed since, having achieved the resolution that I would take employment as a housemaid, if need be, to regain my self-respect, I broke it like a bonbon to admit you to my acquaintance. But this interview, on this ground, shall be the end. I shall return to you my share of your fee; grotesque as the situation is, I must give Lady Tralves the four hundred pounds to which her part in the pitiful transaction entitles her."

She put a hand, in cruel pressure, upon the round bosom that had begun to heave more quickly.

"Return to America, Mr. Hillegas," she said, an almost maternal softness in her tone. "Go back and—and"—the denting pressure of her hand and her averted, downcast look told a little of the penalty she paid for the brave words—"and learn the contempt a man such as you should feel for the woman who could make a trade of transactions you know profane her."

While she was speaking, his flush of youth had withdrawn itself from his countenance. The man who regarded her now wore the gravity of a judge—a quiet, calm balance of thought such as one holds who weighs without bias, justly. The new depth and positiveness of his tones impelled her to a swift glance at him, to make sure he could be the ardent boy of a moment earlier.

"Miss Scarbannon," he told her, "I have studied and practised the profession of law for ten years in a great city, Philadelphia, where there is much evil, much chicanery, and much crime—as there is in every place where men assemble, in my world and in yours. I do not know what circumstances have constrained you to a business which you—you dislike. But if ever I have known any woman whom I could honor, your scruples and your resolve—your very humiliation of your proud, sensitive, generous spirit in this confession you make for my welfare—are all that could be needed to command the respect of the most upright among men."

"Oh!" she cried. "Can you not see beyond the glowing spectrum of me that dazzles your discernment? You *must* accept your disillusion! Think of it. You, a man entering upon your manhood's prime, have by some miracle of virtue and of soul preserved the fresh delicacy, the sublime impressions, of youth. And this—ah"—it was a moan of renunciation with which she breathed it—"is first love. Help me crush it, for your older self's happiness. Help me free you from that obsession of fond memories which all humanity seems to cherish and to mourn. You, in your great country of opportunity, with your vast wealth, have no right to maim your spirit—I dare not let you leave me crippled in your very soul—at the outset of your career."

"My wealth—my vast wealth?" He smiled at her questioningly.

"Why, yes! You fling away a thousand pounds for a word and a glance—it is only the uncountable wealth of the American which can be so lavish in caprice."

The low laugh that answered her told again of the boy, amused at some quaint error.

"Why," he exclaimed, "I can't guess

where Lady Tralves could have been so misinformed. I referred her only to our consul-general and the London correspondents of my bank, for I have no acquaintance here that she would recognize." He turned grave again. "I must acquit myself of false pretense. I am a lawyer, of a family which, here, you would term middle class, although it harks back to the Revolution, our *anno domini* of respectability. If I should become wealthy, or distinguished in my profession, and chose to urge my claims, I suppose the modest name of Hillegas would bear the usual phœnix-like revival. But I have been fortunate, as yet, merely in that my preceptor, an old man who is famous as a corporation counsel, took a liking to me. Two years ago, while the husks of my novitiate were still dry in my mouth, he offered me a partnership based upon a small share of his immense earnings, for the burden of his work was beyond his strength. And he undertook to transfer to me gradually his whole great practise if I should justify his estimate of my powers. Trifling as my income is proportionately, under our agreement, I saved some few thousands. When I told him I longed to do my Europe while I was still young enough to enjoy it, the dear old fellow bade me go ahead, and rectify for the pair of us the mistake he had made in refraining when he was young. And so, I came—and have stayed until the very last hour I dare steal from his old age without rank ingratitude. Ah, Miss Scarbannon"—his laugh was a good thing to hear in that sordid air—"I am no plutocrat, no trust magnate, no heir to fortune. I am only your latest American impostor, returning to his briefs, his modest earnings, and his big ambitions, with barely enough cash to rent a fresh suite of apartments and subsist until he makes more."

Lucille Scarbannon trembled, ever so slightly; and the heave of her bosom seemed to separate the words that came tensely, haltedly, from her lips:

"Do you—do you—mean to tell me that, solely to hear my voice, merely to speak with me for a few moments face to face, you have given practically every penny you have in the world—that you have beggared yourself to burn my features into your heart forever?"

"Oh," he rejoined lightly, "that's nothing. I can soon earn more."

But, in her fixed, intent gaze, in the mere eager parting of her asking lips, there was a summons which was an unspoken behest. He responded to it, after his kind, with an instant change from the lightness of his enduring youth to the intense passion of the man:

"Good God, girl, don't you know I would have flung at your feet my body and my soul, my life and every hope of life hereafter, for a kind look out of your dear eyes?"

She could not answer him. She could only rise, unsteadily, for the upward surge of her emotion was breaking the barriers of her whole existence; and she must face it and meet it, bravely, standing. But she swayed toward him as he came to her side; and, as his anxious arm touched her, she drooped upon his shoulder. No lover whose veins ran red with the blood of humanity could have foresworn the near temptation. He held her to him, for an instant, close. Their warm contact struck the waiting fire.

"Ah!" she breathed.

Her mouth, half opened, flowerlike, welcomed her lover's kiss.

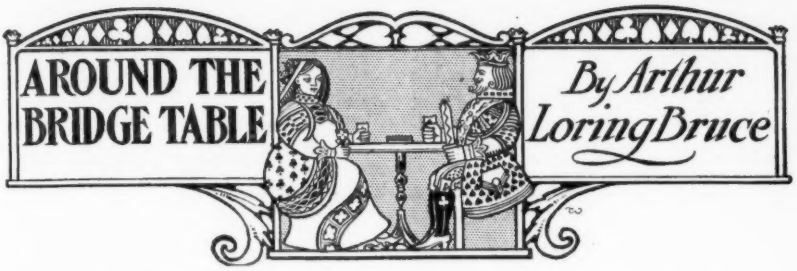
"Now what," asked Miss Scarbannon, in worried recollection, "will the duke, my uncle, say?"

Mr. Hillegas moved his happy cheek from hers and showed her the face of a dismayed boy.

"Oh!" he demanded, his eyes wide in apprehension. "Do we have to ask the duke?"

Lucille, in the solemn silence that fell, laughed. For the first time that day, her laugh had the clear, care-free lilt of a girl.

"Why, no, dearest," she told him, while a little, fortunate smile lingered in delicious enjoyment of her reddened lips. "He gave his consent this morning."



THE other evening I was dining comfortably at a New York club with an inveterate bridge fiend, and we were amusing ourselves by comparing notes as to the most terrible tragedies which had ever befallen us at the bridge-table. I began by narrating to him the horrors of an English house-party which I had unwillingly gone to, and where, for three evenings, I had played double dummy, for farthing points, with a deaf hostess to the accompaniment of a full Hungarian band. I also mentioned a saddening and memorable game which I had played very late at night—at a Newport house, and in which the four twos were removed from the pack and four jokers inserted in their places.

"My dear boy," said my friend, the fiend, "your stories are as mild as a night in June. Prepare yourself for a tragedy more terrifying than any tale by Poe!

"It was," he continued, "at the Hotel Splendide-Royale in Aix-les-Bains. I was playing twenty-cent points—one franc—which is just double my usual limit. I had lost six consecutive rubbers. I had cut, each rubber, against a peculiarly malevolent-looking Spaniard, who had a reputation at cards which was none too savory. There had been trouble about him only the day before at the Casino des Fleurs, where he had been mixed up in a somewhat unpleasant baccarat scandal. He was a crafty and sullen bridge-player and I had conceived a most cordial dislike to him. To make matters worse, he had twice doubled my make of hearts and had twice scored up the game as a consequence. I contained my feeling of antipathy as best I could and bided my time.

"Finally—it was hideously late and the card-room waiter was snoring in the service-closet—my time for revenge arrived. It was my deal, and I saw at a glance that I had dealt myself an enormous hand. I could hardly believe my eyes. I held nine spades with the four top honors, the bare ace of clubs, the bare ace of hearts and the king and queen of diamonds. Here was a certainty of eleven tricks at no trumps, and very possibly twelve or thirteen. I looked at the Spaniard, whose turn it was to lead, and smiled exultantly.

"'No trumps,' I said, the triumph quite perceptible in my voice. Quick as a flash the Spaniard had doubled—and quick as another I had redoubled.

"When, however, he had jacked it up to 96 a trick, I hesitated, but of course went at him again with 192. 'Ah, ha!' I said to myself. 'Mr. Bird of ill-omen, you are my prey, my chosen victim for the sacrifice.'

"The price per trick had soon sailed up to 1,536, and I ventured to look at my partner. He was chalky white about the gills and his eyes seemed to stare idiotically into space. His expression prompted me to say 'Enough.'

"Suddenly I had a terrible feeling of alarm. Had I mistaken the queen of diamonds for the queen of hearts? If so, my king of diamonds was bare and the mysterious Spaniard might run off twelve diamond tricks before I could

say 'Jack Robinson.' With a sinking heart I looked at my hand again—all was well! The queen was surely a diamond. I looked at the olive-skinned gentleman from Spain and begged him to lead a card. I felt a great joy welling up within me. Revenge—soo-eet revenge.

"At this moment the Spaniard led a card and I looked at it nervously. As soon as my eyes beheld it my heart seemed to stop beating. He had opened the ace of a strange green suit, a suit which I had never seen before, a suit all covered with mysterious figures and symbols. I felt strangely giddy, but discarded a low spade. I looked at my partner who was the picture of despair. He said, mechanically and as though life had lost its beauty for him, 'Having no hyppogryphs?' to which icy inquiry I answered in a strange whisper, 'No gryppolyphs.'

"The Spaniard followed with another green card, a king, this time, and again I played one of my beautiful spades. The leader smiled a mahogany smile and proceeded to run off his entire suit of thirteen green cards. He then proceeded to score up a grand slam, the game, and a rubber of 10,450 points or $2,090. I felt my brain reeling, and then and there fainted away with my head on the card-table. Soon, however, I thought I felt the Spaniard tugging at my coat-sleeve. My anger at this was beyond all bounds. I opened my eyes, prepared to strike the crafty foreigner in his wicked face, and saw—my servant standing by my bed with my breakfast-tray in his hands and my bath-robe on his arm."

The gentleman who narrated this terrible nightmare to me is an exceedingly good player, but he has a very great fault and one that is a common one among many good players. In most respects his game is without a flaw, but he has an insane desire to "steal" tricks, that is—by craft, by waiting, by double finesses, by silly leads, and by false-carding, he *sometimes* gains a trick or two. His joy when such tactics succeed is so great that he manages to lose sight of the countless tricks he has, in the meantime, lost by such Macchiavellian wiles. I once ventured to express to him my disapprobation of this style of play. My remark nettled him greatly.

"Look here," he said, "Mr. Dalton recently contributed to the *Strand Magazine* a very enlightening article on the absurd blunders which he had seen at the bridge-table, during his long career as a player. Now, why don't you write an article for AINSLEE'S on the blunders which you yourself have committed at the game? No one that I know is better qualified to write about bad bridge than you are, and, just think of it, you could go on writing the articles for years." Now, I freely admit that I rarely play an evening without making blunders—that is a part of the fun of bridge—but I consider that the straight and normal game will win more tricks, in the long run, than the methods employed by my cunning friend.

I may say that this "cunning" game is unfortunately beginning to prevail wherever bridge is played. I have recently returned from Paris, where I played a great deal and where the standard of play is very high, but the French have gone very far wrong, it seems to me, in deviating from a sensible adherence to rules and indulging in a fantastic and irregular method of play.

For instance, in Paris to-day, the best players do not open the fourth best card of their long suit. They insist that it gives altogether too much valuable information to their adversaries. Again they will play the lowest of touching honors, instead of the highest; they open short suits; they declare gamblers' makes and switch suits in a no-trump declaration with a rapidity which is not only terrifying but costly.

I ventured to remark to my dinner companion that I thought his game, like that played in Paris, was a losing one.

"Not at all," he said. "I am certain that I win by it."

Curiously enough, that very evening, we sat down at the table, and he lost a very costly rubber for me by what

might be described as "overcleverness." I will quote the hand here, as it is a fair sample of the misguided ingenuity of many good players. I have seen many, many hands butchered in much the same way.

He and I were 24 and our adversaries were 8 on the rubber game. He had dealt and left it to me, and I had declared hearts. The hands were as follows:

Dealer.—9, 8, 4, hearts; king, jack, 4, diamonds; ace, jack, 10, spades; 10, 9, 8, 6, clubs.

Dummy.—Ace, jack, 10, 5, 3, hearts; 9, 3, 2, diamonds; queen, 9, spades; ace, jack, 7, clubs.

Leader.—7, 6, 2, hearts; ace, queen, 10, diamonds; king, 8, 7, 3, 2, spades; 3, 2, clubs.

Third hand.—King, queen, hearts; 8, 7, 6, 5, diamonds; 6, 5, 4, spades; king, queen, 5, 4, clubs.

The leader opened with the three of clubs; dummy played the seven; third hand held the trick with the queen, and the dealer followed with the six. The dealer carefully studied the hand and immediately conceived two very wrong notions about it. First, that the leader had opened a club suit of four or five cards with an honor, and, second, that, as there were two double finesses in the hand—in hearts and clubs—he would try them both, and, as he afterward expressed it, "make a killing."

As a matter of fact, there is but one way, at a score of 24, of playing this hand. Dummy should at once play the ace of clubs, and follow it with the ace and another heart. One trick is all that is needed to win the rubber, and this method of play is practically certain to win it, unless the cards are phenomenally distributed. In this particular case he could have made the necessary trick very comfortably and won our match, but he was so entranced by the two double finesses that he actually succeeded in losing three odd tricks, the game, and the rubber. His play, or misplay of the hand was as follows—the underlined card wins the trick:

Trick 2.—8 of diamonds, 4, *ten*, 2.

Trick 3.—2 of clubs, jack, *king*, 8.

The dealer, it may be noted, was still laboring under the delusion that the leader had opened a five-card club suit to the king, which would mark third hand with no more clubs, so he, for the second time, refused to part with dummy's ace. At this point, third hand could have given the leader a ruff in clubs, but dummy's weak diamonds attracted him and he accordingly played up to this weakness.

Trick 4.—7 of diamonds, king, *ace*, 3.

The leader was now in an awkward position. He did not like to lead away from his king of spades, as, by sitting still, he must, sooner or later make a spade trick, so he ventured his highest heart.

Trick 5.—7 of hearts, 3, *king*, 4.

The dealer, hypnotized by the double finesse in hearts and growing more and more cunning as the hand progressed, played a low heart instead of his ace. Third hand, of course, false-carded with the king of hearts and, seeing a good chance to lead the spades up to dummy's comparative weakness, played the six of spades. The dealer, hoping that, as every suit had gone wrong, he might make two tricks in the spade suit, allowed the trick to run up to the queen.

Trick 6.—6 of spades, 10, *king*, 9.

The leader could now see that, if the queen of diamonds was not ruffed, the game was saved, and he accordingly promptly played it.

Trick 7.—*Queen of diamonds*, 9, 5, jack.

The game having been saved, the leader could now afford a "fancy" play, and somehow guessing that his partner's king of hearts had been a false card, he risked another lead of trumps.

Trick 8.—6 of hearts, 5, *queen*, 7.

The dealer, fooled by third hand's having taken the first trump trick with the king, and placing the queen with the leader, again stumbled into the trap. Third hand now led a club, as he was almost certain that the leader had another trump.

Trick 9.—5 of clubs, 9, *two of hearts*, ace of clubs.

After this the dealer's cards were, of

course, good upon the board. My partner had played badly four times—twice in not playing the ace of hearts and twice in refusing to part with the ace of clubs. Here was a fine example of a hand being ruined by wily playing. In speaking of wily players and the crafty game now played so generally abroad, I venture the assertion that the wiliest card-players in the world are the Armenians.

An experience which befell a friend of mine—Count P.—in Paris, will bear out my somewhat sweeping assertion. He met, at the Railroad Club in Paris, a very likable and talented young Armenian with whom he struck up quite a friendship, and who, it developed, was a very fair bridge-player. After playing with him on one or two occasions and finding him a most agreeable partner, he was delighted to receive an invitation from him to dine at his house on the Avenue Kléber. The Armenian explained that his father was in Smyrna, but that his sister and mother were devoted to bridge and that the dinner would be an informal affair and merely a pretext to have a few friendly rubbers.

Count P. accepted with alacrity and presented himself at a little after eight at their "hotel"—in Paris any large house is called a "hotel." The ladies were excellent linguists and altogether charming dinner companions. After a rather fanciful dinner, which consisted largely of pilaff and matzoon, and while smoking Turkish cigarettes—the ladies were accomplished smokers—and drinking Turkish coffee, the young man explained that the ladies did not play very high stakes as it was against their principles. They seemed of the highest order of culture and refinement, and my friend was, of course, ready to fall in with their views regarding the matter of stakes.

The mother finally suggested that twenty-cent points—one franc—was a very good figure to fix upon. The Frenchman, who never liked to play over ten-cent points, protested as politely as he could, saying that he could not increase his points, and suggested ten cents as the basis of play, to which everybody agreed.

The game went on smoothly enough for a few hands. During the play of a difficult hand, however, the count was horrified to see his partner, the young lady of the house, deliberately peeking at the dealer's hand. Shortly after this she claimed an extra trick, after the cards had been gathered. There was some slight discussion about the matter and the claim was finally disallowed.

A little later, it being his partner's deal, he distinctly saw her change the cut. Gradually it began to dawn upon him that the polished and cultivated young lady was nothing but an ordinary cheat.

What was he to do? He was winning: his gains were come by dishonestly, and yet, as a guest in the house he could not very well complain or make a scene in the bosom of the family. He was under their rooftree and had just partaken generously of their pilaff and matzoon.

His next shock came when it was his turn to deal. The mother arose, while he was picking up his hand and, lighting a fresh cigarette, deliberately stood behind him and looked at his cards. Another favorite trick of the mother's was to groan audibly when a suit was led by her partner which did not best fit in with the exigencies of the occasion, or the particular contents of her hand. In this way she kept her partner tolerably well informed, throughout the evening, of the cards which she held.

The count began to feel very nervous and decidedly ill at ease. Finally he was greatly surprised to hear his partner accuse her mother of tapping on her brother's foot, evidently some prepared signal between them for a specific lead—trumps, or clubs, or whatever the suit might be. The poor Frenchman was nonplused, and thought of pleading a headache and throwing his cards upon the table in despair. The luck was suddenly running against him, and the nervous strain, due to his distressing discovery, was beginning to tell on him. He finished the rubber,

however, paid his losses, and politely made his excuses to the ladies. As he was leaving the room the mother called out to him: "Count P., you must come again and you must be prepared to play for a little higher stakes."

In the anteroom, while putting on his coat, he turned to the Armenian, and, in a burst of candor, said:

"My dear fellow, you must forgive me if I speak to you with the utmost frankness. I can never play in this house again."

"Oh," he answered, "I know what you mean! They cheat! Of course they do; I meant to tell you, before we began, that we always cheat, when we play at home. We think that bridge without cheating is no sport at all. I must apologize, though, for the ladies. They do it so clumsily! Why, anybody could detect them. They do it so badly that it is really absurd—but you should see my father. He is too wonderful at it. No one could possibly detect *him*."

"And you," said the Frenchman, "do you cheat, too?"

"With my family, always, but at the club or in a friend's house, never—unless the cards are running very badly against me."

There is a bridge anecdote that has not as yet traveled very far, and, as it is a recent one, I may be excused for narrating it.

There is a certain Mrs. Rich in New York society who is as devoted to the game as one could well be. She makes everything, except her two children, subservient to the game. She attends bridge classes, bridge teas, and bridge tournaments without end. She is, unfortunately, married to a wealthy but worthless and rascally young club-man who treats her either with studied indifference or with a fair degree of cruelty.

In her bridge class she has three devoted friends—all of them happily married. These ladies had urged her, more than once, to sue for a divorce.

"It is a shame," they said, "that he should ruin your life and that of your two children."

The poor woman was in some doubt as to what course to pursue. Finally, a brilliant idea occurred to her. She would consult her bridge teacher! He was the one man in all the world whom she confided in, and she trusted him more than she did her lawyer or her minister. He had solved so many difficult problems for her that he might solve this. His judgment, she thought, was certain to be sane and unprejudiced.

The three ladies were consulted, and they all thought the suggestion a brilliant one. Mr. Elstreet—we will call him—was accordingly written to by the unhappy lady. His answer was handed to her while she was entertaining her three classmates with a rubber of bridge and a cup of tea. The ladies, who felt some curiosity as to the nature of his reply, were delighted when Mrs. Rich finally volunteered to read the letter aloud.

It ran as follows:

> My Dear Mrs. Rich: I have thought over very carefully the little problem which you were good enough to submit to me for solution. When you have a knave alone, it is often a wise plan to discard him, but holding, as you do, a knave and two little ones, it seems the better part of discretion not to discard him, as he might offer some protection against unexpected attacks later in the game.
>
> I am, dear Mrs. Rich, yours, etc.

This same bridge instructor is a noted wag, and I remember a particularly amusing answer which he made to a question which I once propounded to him in the seclusion of a club card-room. It was apropos of an original club make. Now, I suppose there is nothing more exasperating in bridge than to pick up a big club hand, with, say, six or seven in the suit and perhaps two or three honors, and to be forced to leave the make to dummy, hoping for a no-trump declaration or a good red make—only to get the inevitable "spade" with three or four wretched little spades. It seems to me that I experience this tragic fate more often than any other player in the world. Having this in mind, I asked him what he thought of an original club make, with no score.

"Well," he said, "there isn't much to choose between making it and leaving it. It's usually bad either way. You either leave it and get spades, or else you *don't* leave it and get the devil."

I remember a story which this same teacher told me about a well-known widow in London who was a guest at a large house-party where many fashionable people had gathered for the week-end. The widow was an enthusiastic bridger. She took the game very seriously—so seriously that she frequently dreamed about it at night, and even, her maid declared, talked about it in her sleep. On one particular occasion her maid had thought it best to waken her, as she seemed in such dire distress over some difficult hand, or some stupid blunder on the part of her partner.

On this particular house-party, the widow's room was directly across the hall from the host's. Everybody had been playing fairly late, and the ladies had gone to their rooms and "turned in" at about twelve o'clock. The men had played until about two. The housekeeper, in making her final round of the house, noticed that an electric light was burning outside the widow's bedroom. As she approached the door, to turn out the light, she was startled to hear the lady's voice addressing somebody in an agonized and supplicating way.

As the door was ajar, she paused in some alarm, only to hear the widow call out: "My diamonds, my diamonds, why didn't I protect them? I am lost, absolutely lost!"

The housekeeper, not knowing the intricacies of bridge and thoroughly alarmed by the idea of a burglar in the widow's room, rushed to the host's door and hastily summoned him to the rescue. After a somewhat noisy consultation between them, as a result of which some of the disrobing bachelors were attracted to the scene of conflict, a united descent was made upon the unfortunate widow's stronghold. The net result of the sortie was that the widow was greatly annoyed, the host was unmercifully chaffed, and the housekeeper received her first lesson in bridge.

In closing this rambling chapter of memories and anecdotes I must be permitted to say that "house-party" bridge is, in my opinion, about the most disturbing sort of card-playing that can well be imagined. The players are, as a rule, either telephoning, or pouring tea, or receiving visitors, or playing the pianola, or forgetting the trump, or quarreling about the stupidity of their partner, or gossiping about some of the characters of the countryside, or, worst of all, forgetting to settle their account, on departure.

I recently tabulated, for parties of this sort, a set of pointed remarks which can be used, alternately, after the play of every hand. The remarks have so often been addressed to me that I collected them for the benefit of posterity.

As soon as your partner has finished playing a hand, glare at her, or him, and select one of the following gems:

(1) You played it the only way to lose the odd.

(2) Why, in Heaven's name, didn't you get out the trumps?

(3) You must lose a pot of money at this game, don't you?

(4) It's lucky we aren't playing ten-cent points.

(5) Why not take the finesse the other way?

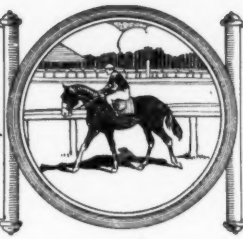
(6) The eight of clubs was good, you know!

(7) Yes, if you had only played your ace of diamonds we would have saved it.

(8) What a pity that you didn't open the hearts.

My own belief is that reproofs of this sort do no good at all, and only tend to worry and fluster one's partner. I always try by a supreme effort to control my righteous wrath and indignation as best I can. A compliment to your partner at bridge, however disingenuous and undeserved, will often save you more money than all the contumely and criticism which you can possibly heap upon him.

The ALABAMA KING



By Elmore Elliott Peake

THE darkies straddled the fence which guarded the track, perched in the trees like crows, and packed themselves in the grand stand, one sable tier above another, until the ramshackle old structure creaked in every joint. The finish of each race was greeted with a pandemonium of yelps, squeals, and "Oh, my Gawds." Then, amid clouds of cheap tobacco smoke and the clink of flasks, the bettors squared accounts.

It was a show for darkies, by darkies. Only two white men were present—one of them an elderly Southern gentleman, on speaking terms with all the blacks; the other a stout, smooth-shaven, red-faced man with eyes of Tipperary blue and a yellow waistcoat figured with horseshoes. The latter watched the scene with a broad grin of enjoyment, and chuckled aloud when one of the horses in the 2:40 trot was started some twenty rods behind all the others.

"That's the Alabama King, Mr. Crowe," said Colonel Sales. "The other fellows won't race unless he's handicapped like that."

"Look here, Colonel Sales!" exclaimed the Irishman whimsically. "*That* ain't the hoss you brought me clear down from New York to see?"

"That's the horse," answered the other calmly. "Wait till you see him go."

The animal in question was a peculiar bluish-black, so high in the withers as to have a strange giraffeish look, and possessed of a murderous pea-green eye with which he constantly warned the world to keep its distance. His stocky body, big knees, and enormous hoofs indicated that he had been born for the plow; and, indeed, he was branded with the marks of collar and trace-chains. Yet, with it all, there was a depth of chest about him, a muscling of thigh and shoulder, which attracted the racing man's trained eye.

When the horse started Crowe drew his stop-watch. Away scurried the scrubby bunch, far ahead, with drivers already whipping and bawling like a lot of boys. But the King shortened their lead at every step, and when he had twice circled the half-mile track, the nearest horse was a dozen lengths behind. Upon which the victorious black driver, dressed as gorgeously as a cockatoo and none too sober, leaped to the seat of his old-fashioned sulky, flapped his arms, and crowed like a cock.

"Thirty-three," announced Crowe. "That's astonishin', considerin' the looks of the animal and that wagon-road track. I'd 'a' sworn, though, he was goin' fifteen seconds better'n that."

"I'll explain the discrepancy," observed the colonel, with a knowing smile, "and also why this horse was not discovered sooner. He's never been raced anywhere but here. The niggers built this track themselves, for their own use. They laid it off with a fifty-foot tape; and, of course, niggerlike, they bungled the job. They got it a trifle over twenty rods too long. Therefore, twice around is nine furlongs instead of eight. Now, reducing the King's time on that basis"—he figured a moment on the back of an envelope—"you have something close to

2:16. What further reduction training and a good track would make, you are more capable of saying than I."

Crowe emitted a soft whistle.

"Let me see them figures, colonel," he murmured shrewdly. He studied the envelope for some time, for arithmetic was not his forte; then a smile submerged his jocund face from double chin to pompadoured red hair. "Colonel, I been chasin' rainbows all my life, but I'll be dodgasted if I don't believe I've got a lead-pipe cinch on a pot of gold this time. I'm ready to talk to the owners of this horse."

"The Calverts own him," explained Colonel Sales, as they jogged along the rutted, red-clay road which wound over the Northern Alabama hills. "The family has petered out until there's only two left—a boy and a girl. Everybody likes the girl, but the boy is queer—worthless, I might say; one of the poor and proud kind; never done a day's work in his life. Consequently the place—twenty-four hundred acres in all—has gone to rack and ruin."

In spite of this warning, Barney Crowe, with the sleek stock-farms of the North in his mind, was entirely unprepared for the desolation which met his eyes at Fair Oaks. The long, beautifully shaded avenue, leading from the public road to the homestead, showed scarcely a wheel-track through the rank weeds. The brick outhouses were roofless ruins. The barn, weathered to an ancient gray, sagged in the middle like a sway-backed horse. The flower-garden, behind a low brick wall, was a jungle of hollyhocks, asters, and other lusty plants that had long since broken down the borders of their beds and overrun the territory of their weaker brothers.

The big house itself, with its unhinged blinds and decaying cornices, wore a weary, aged look, like an old man waiting for the grave. And the only signs of husbandry, in all the broad acres unrolled to view, were a kitchen plot, in which a bent negress was hoeing a patch of tobacco, and a small field of corn.

Colonel Sales remained in his buggy while the horseman pushed his thick figure through a narrow picket-gate, weighted with a cannon-ball, and passed up the moss-grown flags. On the lower floor of the two-storied "gallery," in an easy chair, with his feet on the rail, lounged the master of Fair Oaks—a young man of possibly thirty. His smart white flannels contrasted startlingly with his sedate and venerable environment, and suggested an impending lawn sociable or outdoor tea; but his moody, melancholy face acquitted him of any pleasuring intent. He did not even move as Crowe approached.

It was a slim young woman of an elusive, sylvan beauty, with the scent of woodsy things in her brown hair and the stain of wind and sun upon her cheek, who gave over playing with a collie pup at the bottom of the steps, swept back the loose strands from her eyes, and greeted the stranger, half shyly, in a clear, boyish treble.

Crowe had had few dealings in life with women, aside from marrying one of them. In fact, he was a little afraid of women. But after a second glance at the frigid figure on the gallery, he decided to take his chances with the young lady.

"Miss Calvert, I come to see you about your hoss, Alabama King," he began, after introducing himself. "I just seen him trot over at the Turkey Creek track, and I like him. Is he for sale?"

"Oh, did he win?" exclaimed the girl eagerly. And when assured that he had won, she seemed about to clap her hands until a glance toward the house sobered her. "We should like to sell him, Mr. Crowe, and would have sold him several years ago, if we could have done so honestly. But he has two great faults—he is very vicious, and no one except our negro boy Chocolate—and myself—can drive him."

Crowe's face fell.

"Are you sure of that, miss? Any good drivers ever tackled him?"

"At least half a dozen. They wanted him for racing at county fairs. But they had to give it up."

Barney removed his hat and mopped

his forehead. This was indeed a jolt. His pot of gold was already receding.

"I suppose a man could buy the horse and take the boy along, too. You got any objections to lettin' him go?"

"Oh, no. He's his own master." She met her interlocutor's glance with a pair of earnest, intelligent eyes. Then a delicate flush overspread her brown cheek. "But I ought to tell you, in addition, that a man tried that once, and brought both horse and boy back. Chocolate is very unreliable. He—he is addicted to drink."

Crowe dropped his eyes under this second disappointment; but he still held his place with the bulldog tenacity which his face and figure implied. For a moment or two he wiped his face, in an embarrassed way, with a yellow silk handkerchief; then he continued diffidently:

"Miss Calvert, Chocolate never gits drunk here on the place, does he?"

"Very seldom."

"He wouldn't git drunk anywhere that you were, would he?"

Ruth Calvert smiled. "I hardly think so. I have great influence over him. But if you are thinking of asking me to——"

"Wait, ma'am!" said Crowe shortly, lifting a stubby hand with something like eloquence. "I was thinkin' of that very thing. I know you're a lady, miss, and that ladies don't mix much with race-hosses; and I wouldn't make such a proposition, mind you, unless there was something in it for you. You've been very candid with me. Let me hand it back to you. That hoss of yours is speedy—speedier than you think. He made a mile to-day in sixteen, though nobody knows it but Colonel Sales and me; for that track runs nine furlongs to the mile. With trainin', and the right track, I believe he could better that time by ten seconds. Now, such a horse, miss, with his pluggy looks, and no mark against him, is a gold-mine if he's handled right, and I'm the man that can do it. All you got to do is to put him in a maiden race, with a fat purse, and he'll pay for himself three times over if he wins once. That's all I want him to do—win just once; and if you and your brother will come along with the hoss and the nigger, for about six weeks, to allow me time to git 'em both in form, I'll pay all expenses and give you one thousand dollars for the horse. Provided he wins, of course."

Miss Calvert shook her head. "It would be impossible, Mr. Crowe. In the first place——"

"I'll give you *two* thousand!"

His cheeks were now redder than ever. The smile died from the girl's face, but she still shook her head.

"That's a great deal of money, sir—more than we ever dreamed of getting for King. But——"

"*Three* thousand!" The red had now spread to his neck, and his voice was almost harsh.

Ruth turned a little pale, and neither shook her head this time nor voiced a refusal. A struggle was evidently going on within her, for her breast rose and fell perceptibly.

It was a struggle whose intensity neither Crowe nor any one else could gage who was not familiar, on the one hand, with the biting poverty which had been her lot for years; and, on the other hand, with the pride of blood in her veins and the conservative traditions in which she had been reared.

It was not alone that she had been offered a price for a service, not dishonorable indeed, but repugnant to her instincts. It was not alone that the offer came from a hated Northerner; one who, by means of the War—as she saw it—had had a hand in impoverishing her family and in laying her father in an untimely grave.

That which stayed her consent was the House of Calvert—intangible, impersonal, with all its members, except herself and brother, sleeping beneath the chestnuts on the hill, yet a living force. And it was this same fetish, had she but recognized it, which had withheld her brother's hand for so long a time from honest toil.

Finally, though, she was about to speak, when there came an imperative, querulous voice from the gallery:

"Ruth, if the gentleman wants to buy

King, tell him why the horse is not for sale."

The girl started, and her eyes darkened with a daring resolve.

"My brother is a little hard of hearing," she murmured hastily. "He is also a little—a little eccentric. I think I could deal better with him than you could. Would you—would you mind retiring to that bench yonder while I talk with him about your offer? I fear he will not accept it; I am almost sure that he will not; but there are—there are reasons why he should."

The seat indicated was out of earshot from the veranda; but Crowe could see the pair plainly, and the eager, pleading attitude of the girl, as she bent toward her brother, was more eloquent than words. Nor were words wholly lacking, for once or twice there floated to the anxious waiter, in tones indescribably sweet and earnest: "Brother, dear"—"Leo, dear." They brought Crowe's yellow handkerchief again into requisition for the purpose of removing the dew from his brow. Had he offered enough? Could he afford to offer more?

Before he could answer these questions, Miss Calvert descended the steps and lithely crossed the strip of lawn toward her visitor. Her face was flushed and her eyes bright with emotion.

"My brother has said neither yes nor no, Mr. Crowe. We should like until to-morrow morning to decide; and I think it would be most convenient for you—that is, I should be glad to have you remain as our guest to-night. In the morning Chocolate can drive you over to Colonel Sales' or wherever you wish to go."

"Thank you, ma'am, I'll stay," answered Crowe promptly, and stepped out to inform his friend.

He did not drop off to sleep that night with his usual readiness. In the first place, the young master of Fair Oaks had stirred his wrath by not speaking over three words at the supper-table. Secondly, the house was oppressively quiet. His bedroom was quite as large as four rooms in his little Harlem flat, with a ceiling correspondingly high. It seemed to him, too, by the elusive light of the moon, which floated in the tall windows, that the dead and gone Calverts, who hung on the walls in massive gilt frames, looked down upon him coldly, as if doubting his right to be there.

But all this he finally overcame, and was just dozing off, when he was brought back to full consciousness again by a blur of voices, only now and then rising into audibility. He listened for some time, and then his imagination began to work. He fancied that it must be two o'clock or later. The Calverts were surely in bed. Did these voices, then, come from burglars—or uprising negroes—or White Caps—or the Ku Klux Klan? He supposed that the last organization had been out of business for some years, but he was not positive of it; and he was not hankering for any experiential knowledge.

At last he arose, opened his door cautiously, stepped out into the wide hall, and then tiptoed toward the front of the house. The voices failed him several times, but finally he placed them as on the down-stairs veranda; and, standing in an open door which let out on the second story of the veranda, he identified the voices as belonging to the Calverts.

Crowe's evolution had been; immigrant, hod-carrier, contractor, Tammany politician, horseman. He was not a bad man by any means; yet there was nothing in his code of ethics which forbade his crossing the veranda to a position from which he could overhear the conversation below.

"You see, Leo," the girl was saying gently, patiently, as if she had said it over and over before, "none of our friends need ever know *why* we go North. They need never know that it was in connection with King at all, for that matter. And if we can justify our course to our own consciences—if there's nothing to be *ashamed* of, even though we should wish to keep it private—why should we hesitate? You have been so unhappy because you were denied the opportunity of studying law.

Three thousand dollars will more than take you through school. It will support me as well, in the meantime—either here or with you, as you choose. Oh, brother, I feel almost as if God had sent this man to us! It is so much more money than we had ever dreamed of getting for the horse—so much more than we can ever get in any other way."

A silence of a minute or more followed, then the brother spoke.

"I fancy, Ruth, that if God had meant to help us—which is extremely doubtful, in my opinion—he would have chosen a different instrument than an illiterate Irish race-track tout."

"Bully for you, bub!" murmured Crowe to himself, with a grin. "I can see that you are weakenin'. Just the same, I'd like to give you a swift kick where it would lift you the highest, you snivelin', whinin' cry-baby! If you had half the nerve of that little sister of your'n, you'd be twice the man you air."

"You wouldn't have to do anything yourself," the mellow, pensive voice floated on, ignoring her brother's thrust. "I could look after everything. And even I wouldn't have much to do—merely keep Chocolate under my eye, where I could watch his hours and his associates."

"That's what I balk at—chaperoning a nigger!" blurted out Calvert, with deep disgust.

"But don't I, after all, do that very thing, right here at home? And you wouldn't have me neglect him. You wouldn't have me let him go to the dogs. Mother did the same thing for his father."

The brother did not answer at once. The talk drifted, for the moment, from the issue at hand; and Crowe, chilling in his diaphanous robe, slipped back to bed. But he had heard enough to enable him to drop off confidently to sleep. And his confidence was justified the next morning, when he met Ruth in the broad central passage down-stairs, with a pair of scissors in one hand and a cluster of wet roses in the other.

"Mr. Crowe," said she, with a sweet dignity, which, however, could not quite conceal the leaping joy in her eyes, "my brother has decided to accept your offer."

II.

The private track to which the Alabama King, with his retinue, was brought for training, was a quiet place in the country where many a maiden—in the parlance of the turf—had been secretly prepared for her début in the equine world. Strangers were not welcome, and a ten-foot picket-fence, around the whole farm of five hundred acres, excluded uninvited representatives of the sporting fraternity who might have stop-watches in their pockets and an itching desire in their breasts to find out what speed certain horses would probably make on their first public appearance.

Hence Ruth Calvert, with a saddle-horse at her disposal, had few restrictions upon her liberty. Yet the King was seldom in harness that she was not an interested spectator. She was sometimes more; for Gilchrist, the trainer, learning that she too could manage this curious horse, got hold of a sulky adapted to a woman's use, and occasionally asked her to demonstrate some trick of driving which Chocolate had failed to grasp.

Crowe, who frequently ran down from the city in his car and spent a day at the farm, to watch his pet develop, became immensely interested in the girl. He began to suspect the burden which she was carrying in the shape of her brother, and cautiously dropped a word of sympathy now and then. But it was weeks before he elicited an expression of confidence from her, for she was very shy about mentioning family matters.

"If King wins first money in the twenty thousand dollar trot at Sheepside, won't you be a pretty happy girl?" he asked, one day, at the sight of her glowing face when King finished his mile at a tremendous pace.

She was silent for a moment. "He's such a foolish fellow—so gentle with me and so suspicious of all the rest of

mankind, with the exception of Chocolate—that I fear for him when he passes into other hands. His winning that race will mean so much for brother and me that to sell him, after that, seems a tremendous thing. You know I found him, by the roadside, where some gipsies had abandoned him, when he was so little that I could almost have lifted him. He was very sick, and brother wanted to shoot him. But I nursed him well." She smiled through sudden tears; and, plucking a flowering grass, passed its tender white stem slowly between her teeth. "Mr. Crowe," she added hesitatingly, "I wish you would talk to brother more when you are down here. I believe it would help him. He is not very sociable, I know; but that is because he is unhappy. He has suffered a great disappointment in life."

Crowe promised cheerfully. He had observed that Calvert, who had just got back from a little trip to the city, seemed in an unusually black mood.

But if Leo were a drag on Ruth's spirits, Chocolate was a stimulant. He had done well. In fact, he had developed as rapidly as the horse he was to drive; and he had suffered only one lapse from sobriety in six weeks—a most unusual record for him.

Yet the day of the great 2:45 trot dawned upon some uncertain nerves in the quintet about the Alabama King; for it had leaked out that one of the maidens—Gray Ghost by name—had accomplished a mile in 2:06, while the best time that the King had yet made, under very favorable conditions, was only 2:08.

Barney Crowe, born devotee of the Goddess of Chance, was but pleasurably excited, it is true; nevertheless, he walked into the bar of his hotel before breakfast and downed a stiff cocktail. Gilchrist, in his humbler hotel, took straight whisky. Even Leo Calvert, who seldom drank, felt the need of a bumper of sherry.

The two who took nothing for their nerves were the slender girl and the boy who had to go out on that broad, sunlit hippodrome, under the eyes of thirty or forty thousand spectators, and direct a dumb, unreasoning brute along the pathway of success. Did Crowe or Gilchrist, as he quaffed his bracer, wonder how Chocolate's nerves fared?

Some forty minutes before the horses in the 2:45 trot were due at the judges' stand, Gilchrist and Ruth stood in the King's commodious stall. Crowe, with Leo Calvert, had already gone over to the grand stand. Chocolate had slipped down the line of stalls to borrow a rabbit's-foot from a colored friend who had driven a successful race the day before. Outside, at intervals, came the rapid clutter of hoofs as a group of straining horses swept up the backstretch, shortly to be followed by the huzzaing of the multitude in the distant grand stand.

But inside all was peaceful and still. King himself, upon whom so much depended that hazy September day, stood motionless, after his hot bath, with his weight shunted to one hip.

Ruth stepped over and rubbed his soft nose—a trick which would have cost a stranger an ugly bite. Then she slipped back to his tail—his only handsome feature—and smoothed the last tangle out of it.

Gilchrist, who would not have dared such an intimacy himself, watched her curiously. He was a man of few words, but a day or two previously he had shyly confided to Crowe his belief that Miss Calvert possessed some occult influence over the horse.

Finally, though, Gilchrist snapped his watch in his abrupt way, and reached for the harness.

"Chocolate ought to be here," said he.

"He'll surely come in a moment," said Ruth. "He has been gone nearly half an hour." She had been pale all day, and as she stood with her hands upon the half-open door, the trainer noticed her sleeve trembling.

Ten minutes passed. Another group of horses were scoring, off across the tremulous landscape.

"This horse has got to be warmed up!" suddenly exclaimed Gilchrist, with the irritability which always cropped out of him under pressure.

"What *could* have happened?" demanded Ruth, clasping her hands nervously, while a little crimson tongue shot above the delicate curve of her jaw.

Then her taut nerves suddenly relaxed, with a grateful quiver. Chocolate's familiar guffaw floated in at the door, and the next moment Chocolate's familiar figure hove in sight. But it was in a manner that blanched two faces instantly.

"We sure gwine to win, Miss Ruth and Mr. Gill," he babbled, as he reeled in. "'Cause why? 'Cause I done got dat Baltimo' nigger's rabbit's-foot in my pocket. Ole Choc was kind of shaky dis mawnin'. Yas, indeed! Kind of skeered his nuves would gin out. But dis rabbit's-foot done fixed *him*. Yas, hit's fixed him all right."

In the deadly silence which fell, even the drunken Chocolate seemed to understand that something was amiss, and he blinked inquiringly from one to the other.

"Miss Calvert——" It was Gilchrist's voice, hoarse and unnatural; but he did not finish. Instead, he turned to the horse and sadly unchecked him.

"Wait!"

It was Ruth, and she laid a restraining hand upon his arm. She glanced at the sulky. It was a racing-machine in which no woman with skirts could ride with modesty, and there was no other kind at hand. Then she glanced at Chocolate's purple blouse and lemon knickerbockers, hanging on a nail in all their fresh newness. She had made them with her own hand—not without a touch of superstition, perhaps, that they would bring their wearer luck; just as a suit her mother had once made, when the Fair Oaks stables were full of blooded horses, had brought Chocolate's father luck in a race.

"Mr. Gilchrist, take the horse and Chocolate outside and shut the door," said she simply. "I'll be ready in five minutes."

Gilchrist seemed not surprised. His eyes—those hard, cold eyes—merely filled with tears.

"Miss Calvert, if there's any God at all, you *can't* lose this race!"

Crowe, with Calvert at his side—who, for obvious reasons, passed as the owner of Alabama King—flitted between the grand stand and the betting-ring. But he did not bet. That story about Gray Ghost, which he had since verified, had chilled even his exuberant spirits.

Finally, between heats, the entries in the 2:45 trot began to appear on the track, warming up. King should have been among the first of these, for his blood was slow to stir, and Crowe anxiously swept the great oblong with his glass. But the stocky black horse, who would have been as instantly recognizable among those thin-limbed thoroughbreds as a yokel in a drawing-room, was nowhere in sight.

Therefore, when the warning bell for the next heat put an end to the practise work, without the King having appeared, Crowe contracted a case of fidgets which sent him to the bar under the grand stand. Then he started, post-haste, for the stables.

Taking a final reconnaissance, however, through his glass, from the end of the grand stand, he at last spied the object of his solicitude standing in a sulky in front of his stall. But the driver! Crowe rubbed his eyes, wiped off the objectives of his binocular, and looked again. For a few seconds his hands trembled. Then, suddenly, he became quite calm, returned to the impatient Calvert, sat down softly beside him, and explained that everything was all right—yes, decidedly all right.

And as long as the King stuck to the back-stretch, when the next opportunity for warming up came, everything was all right. For at that distance, as Crowe knew well, the near-sighted young man could not distinguish a black face from a white. But the first time the horse passed the grand stand, after the bell-call, Calvert stiffened like a man on a live wire.

"Who's that driving King?" he demanded so fiercely that Crowe all but dodged.

"Why, Choc, of course," he answered carelessly.

"It is not Choc. It's a white person!" declared Calvert excitedly.

"Damme if it ain't!" exclaimed Crowe, with affected surprise. "Somethin' must have happened to Choc. Yes—that's Billy Burke, the best breaker of balky horses I ever knew, and the——"

"Mr. Crowe," broke in Calvert, with white lips, "no man on earth could drive that horse but Chocolate. He'd balk in an instant. That driver is my sister, and you know it!"

"Look here, Leo," said Crowe soothingly, using the other's given name for the first time. "That *is* your sister. And a tremendous surprise it is to me, too. But something has evidently happened to Choc, and rather than flunk on a race that means so much to us all, she has thrown convention to the winds. Sure, I glory in her nerve; and proud you ought to be, my boy, of her, too. She'll win that race—it's the first hope I've had to-day. She'll send you home with a wad of money in your trousers that would choke an ox, and no one will ever be the wiser."

"Never!" cried Calvert tragically. "I'll not let her disgrace herself—unsex herself—to send me to school. I'll withdraw the horse."

He rose up, but a heavy hand brought him suddenly down again. Crowe's angry face pressed nearer, and his little blue eyes, usually so mild, snapped viciously.

"You see that policeman there? He's an old friend of mine. He'd help me out of a tight place any time. You make another move and I'll have him lock you up in his little detention-box for a lunatic or a dynamiter or any other old thing that's dangerous. By the time you git out to explain, the race is over. See! Now will you be good?"

Calvert, courageous but helpless, removed his hat and dried his damp brow. Crowe beckoned to one of his followers.

"Micky, take this hundred down and bet it on Alabama King." Then to Calvert: "That's for Miss Ruth—every cent of it. The odds are fifteen to one, and a nice little bunch of pin-money she'll have if she wins. Now let's git a drink. We both need one."

The secret of Ruth's sex seemed safe enough, for her cap was pulled tightly down over her hair, front and back, so that not a betraying tendril escaped. Her slender figure, in blouse and knickerbockers, looked like that of a beardless boy.

It was the horse, not the driver, that became the target of every eye. The first time he passed the stand, with the heavy *clip-clop, clip-clop* of his broad hoofs, he was greeted with a chorus of laughter and jeers; and Micky Camp—he who had placed the hundred for Crowe—looked back at his patron with a puzzled grin. But neither horse nor driver batted an eyelid at the ridicule, and Crowe's teeth settled doggedly on his unlighted cigar.

There were thirteen entries in the race—seven in the first tier, and six in the second. The King had drawn sixth place in the second tier—the worst position possible but one, and from which he could extricate himself by pure speed and nothing else.

The first time the group scored, King came up two lengths in the rear, with his right-hand neighbor already edging in to squeeze him out. On the second score, his position had not improved, and Crowe all but bit his cigar in two. On the third it was even worse, with No. 13 fairly blocking him before the wire was reached. But the starter, evidently concluding that the heavy black was hopelessly outclassed, let the group off.

The next moment, when men and animals settled to their work with a grimness which seemed far removed from sport, something happened which was destined to take its place among the legends of the turf. The youthful driver of Alabama King, though far in the rear, flung away his whip!—not at his feet, which might have been an accident, but far to one side, where no unlucky horse would slip upon it. Then he raised his empty hand high in the air and brought the palm of it down sharply upon the glossy rump before him.

Instantly a change came over the horse. He straightened his neck, like a wild goose in its flight, laid back his ears, and dropped his whole body closer to the ground. Then, oh then, how he did go! He went through the straggling first tier like a greyhound through a litter of French poodles. At the half-mile, he had put all but four horses behind him. At the three-quarters, all but two; and on the turn into the stretch he broke even with the equine rocket which had led from the word "Go"—the redoubtable Gray Ghost.

The grand stand arose as one man, and forty thousand pairs of eyes were turned up the track just in time to see a thing that must have made many a heart turn a somersault. The cap of the black horse's driver blew off his head—or *her* head now, as everybody could see; a great coil of hair balanced for an instant on one shoulder; then broke and fell and streamed straight out behind.

At this startling transformation, Gray Ghost's driver vouchsafed his rival an instantaneous glance; then faced ahead again and laid on his whip with vicious fury. The girl made no counter move, for the animals were still abreast, and remained so for another twenty rods. But more than this was needed for success, and more came in due season—though not before Crowe's feet had turned icy cold. For fifteen rods from the finish the girl, for the second time, lifted her small hand and smote her horse twice upon his wet, straining haunch. And he, as if galvanized by her touch, made one tremendous spurt which placed him ahead of his rival by half a length; in which position the two passed under the wire, amid a human tumult which was fairly demoniac.

Crowe, as hysterical as a schoolgirl, threw his arms about Leo Calvert's neck.

"Two-four and a half, old boy, by the eternal gods! And without a whip! She'll take them other two heats like you'd take candy from a kid. Bless her little heart! I'll kiss her feet! I'll pave her path home with twenty-dollar gold pieces! I'll—I'll—— Hooray! Hooray!"

But he was not so humble when the time came. For when he and Leo got to the stall, sweaty and breathless, and Crowe saw Ruth standing there, so slim and pretty in her boy's suit, and still a little pale beneath her hastily pinned up hair, he rushed up to her with irrepressible joy.

"My child, I'm the father of a girl older'n you, and I'm goin' to exercise a father's privileges." With which he planted a hearty smack upon her cheek.

Her breast was still surging, and she struggled with it a moment longer. "You'd better—you'd better kiss old King instead of me," she said archly. "He did the work."

That night there was a little dinner at Crowe's hotel, with plates for only four. As they were separating under the porte-cochère, the happy Irishman spied a dejected figure on the curb-stone.

"By thunder, there's Chocolate! I'd actually forgotten the boy's existence. Come here, Choc!"

The boy slouched dispiritedly forward.

"You been cryin'?" demanded Crowe, plunging his ready fingers into his vest pocket. "Don't do that no more. This ain't *our* day for tears. Let the Gray Ghost fellers shed the salt. Here's the two hundred I promised you. You didn't actually win the race. You slipped a cog at the last minute. But you done fine up till then, and I ain't forgot it." Then, with a wink, he added: "You'd better let Miss Ruth take care of your money, and mebbe she'll add fifty to it, by way of interest, from that pin-money I copped out for her to-day."

"I will, Chocolate," promised the girl softly.

Chocolate's tear-stained face mustered a smile.

"I'se obleeged to you bofe—I suttinly is. But I—but I"—his voice broke—"I sooner have driv ole King to-day than have all the money I could tote off in a cyarpet-bag."

LIGNITE'S LUCKY DRAW



By Steel Williams

THE afternoon that Lucky Marvin's sister strikes Hell's Kitchen, there's quite a gatherin' in my emporium as we rather expects that there'll be a hangin' 'long toward evenin', and course everybody's anxious to be on hand in case the interestin' event comes off. When the stage pulls up in front of the Road to Hell the ribbon-handler walks in to get his liquor a-inquirin' for me.

"Red is settin' private with the Committee," I hears my barkeep say, "which is a-examinin' a gent who we s'picions holds up the Deadwood stage last week; and seein' he's chairman he can't nowise be disturbed 'less it's somethin' plumb urgent and important."

"Which I sure figures it to be," cackles that ornery mule-skinner mighty insinuatin' and sarcastic; "for whenever any female comes pirouttin' into the Bad Lands a-lookin' for me, it's a sure-thing bet that no hangin's or any sech minor matter'll keep me from seein' her hand forthwith or sooner."

Now on the Range we ain't none too accurate posted on the buried past, it bein' regarded as not only bad form but more or less scoicidal to pry into sech private matters. And nat'rally the way he puts the thing sets every one to wonderin' whether I'm one of them gents who trails into the country a-forgettin' to bring along a bindin' female attachment. I has a clean conscience on that partik'ler score, but when I appears and sees the boys that's been playin' bank or just drinkin' sociable all evin' me grinnin' suspicious, I'm that flustered that I blushes till you couldn't see my freckles.

Course everybody crowds along to the door to see what sort of a play is goin' to take place, but their suspicions is all instant demolished soon as they glimpses the girl who's a-settin' in the coach-winder, for it's plain she's a heap too young and handsome to 've ever had a mix-up with me. I'm leadin' the bunch, and soon as my sorrel top-knot looms into sight there's a amoozed dimple dents her plump cheek as she raises her curvin' brows, inquirin':

"Are you Mr. Malone?"

I ain't been mistered 'fore since I can remember, and the laugh goin' up from the boys at my new title comes mighty near stampedin' me complete, but I plays for time by coughin' violent; gettin' my wind, I stammers that I pleads guilty to the onusual indictment.

"Any one in camp from the Twin Boys' Ranch?" she twitters, showin' another invitin' dimple. I'm a-gazin' at her steadfast, but I answers negative mechanical. She sort of frowns like she's some disappointed, then she laughs—explanatory:

"Seein' they didn't know when I was comin' it ain't their fault nobody's here to meet me."

She puckers up her lips charmin' for a second as though she's figurin' her next move, which she final sees and opens a little bag that is hangin' on a steel chain at her slim waist. Producin' a envelope she hands it to me with a smile that sure has the Injun-summer brand on it, for 'fore her black eyes dance away I'm envelerped in a meller,

smoky haze that near suffocates me with its warmin' sweetness and temporary makes me entire oblivious to everything but its manufacturer.

I stands there starin' at her and plumb fergits the letter; but my bein' locoed ain't noticed by nobody but the girl, for every other gent present is in substantial the same trance. She seems to enjoy lookin' over that mesmerized bunch and don't break the spell she's cast over us for a minute or two, then she laughs a little p'inted.

"If you'll only read the letter, Mr. Malone, it'll explain why I wants to see you."

There's another titter at hearin' my new title ag'in, but everybody wakes up and p'ints their ears and sets their eyes to keep cases on the develerpment of the play. And 'spite of bein' the temporary sinosure of the whole bunch I manages with a few pointers from her to extract from the writin' that she's from the Snake River country out in Idaho. She's on her way to see her grandma up in northern Minnesoty, but is goin' to stop off to visit her brother, who marries the girl we former calls the "Daughter of the Ranges."

Lucky and his runnin'-mate, Rosey, is now livin' on a new-opened ranch some ten miles down the river, which he's named in honor of a pair that's recent put in their appearance and has practical took charge of the house.

While I'm a-readin' the letter the girl's a-gazin' about ca'm and collected, and I sees from the way she surveys us that cow-punchers and .45's ain't no novelty to her, though she's sure a considerable one to us, for they ain't stock enough of white women in the Bad Lands at the time to only just make one set when it comes to salutin' your partner and balancin' all.

When I finishes readin' I looks at her inquirin'. She turns on that warmin' smile which seems to nat'rally take in the whole crowd, and every gent who absorbs his share of the heat that emanates from her hazy, all-includin' eyes is willin' to gamble his last chip that it's meant for him exclusive.

So when she says: "I want to make the ranch to-night and would like to take my trunk if there's any way to do it," every man but me announces prompt that he's got the only rig in camp and'll be plumb tickled to death to hook up and get to movin' immediate.

The prospective hangin' has complete lost its charm, and with hand on gun each gent crouches to spring into a foot-race for the Palace Hotel stable where the only thing in Hell's Kitchen that moves on wheels, 'ceptin' the stage, is standin' under a shed. Now, this prize-vehicle don't happen to belong to none of 'em, but is a part of the belongin's of the feller we're a-investigatin' as a probable outlaw; said party havin' brought the buckboard into camp a few days back, and storin' her while he goes traipsin' over the Range on one of the mustangs which helps pull it into town.

The boys is all more or less sprung, and I figures that it's an even bet that there'll be a shootin'-scrape growin' out of the argiment that's sure to rise over who touches the buckboard first and has the right to use it, so I concludes to head off fatalities by actin' in my joodicial capacity immediate. And as I thinks her over rapid I makes up my mind that as a matter of law the belongin's of the suspected gent follers his person, which bein' in the hands of the Committee nat'rally includes the buckboard and brings it within its joorisdiction.

So as the bunch dives from the saloon platform, I hollers out that as chairman I rules official that nobody can take the rig without gettin' the consent of the s'posed outlaw, as I holds that till he's found guilty his outfit belongs to him same as any other feller's. This rulin' ca'ms things down, for the Committee is now on the platform and backs up my holdin' unanimous.

The prospective corpse has been brought along, and he's left standin' in the door with his hands roped behind him. His hobbled condition ketches the girl's eye, and she immediate shows she's entire familiar with joodicial pro-

ceedin's in the cattle country by inquirin' of me in a interested whisper as to what it's claimed the gent in hock has been a-doin'.

I spreads the layout for her, brief but lucid, as to how the stage has been held up and the ribbon-handler serious punctured in the argiment over the express-box. The turn's been made single-handed after dark, so the driver can't positive identify the feller who puts a bullet in him; but he's p'inted out that the hold-up gent is unusual tall, which tallies with the shape of the man we has in limbo.

He's been round the camp for near a week a-ridin' out frequent, claimin' he's a-explorin' for coal of which there's certain plenty, sech as it is. He gives it out that he's hopin' to find a seam of lignite four or five feet thick which he tells us can be mined for a big bank-roll when the railroad comes through. His name's Wallace, but I dubs him "Lignite," which everybody calls him without no objection on his part.

I concedes to the girl that we ain't got no direct evidence agin' the supposed outlaw, 'ceptin' the fact that the night the hold-up takes place he ain't in camp and might easy have done the trick. As I points out to her, they ain't nobody else that we kin lay it onto and there's a sort of general feelin' that it's about time to make a example of somebody, for there's been considerable trouble with road-agents lately and no stringin's whatever.

"Is that all you got to hang him on?" she asks, evident some surprised and condemnin'.

"That's mighty close to a show-down for our case," I grins, considerable flustered by the sarcastic elevatin' of her little nose. Then I sees sech a disgusted look come over her face that I thinks of somethin' we considers strong agin' him, and I adds hasty:

"I forgets to mention that we finds close to four thousand on him, which bein' way over the average bank-roll we considers as a weighin' corroboratin' circumstance."

"It would be for a cow-puncher"—her black eyes gettin' snappy—"but for a man who's wantin' to buy coal-land place of poker-checks I guess such backin' as he carries with him ain't nowise onusual."

And leanin' her head on her slim, brown hand, she sort of ponders a second 'fore askin':

"How much was there in the box?"

"Eight thousand four hundred currency, billed to Glendive, Montana."

At my answer another contemptous elevatin' of her nose takes place, and I sudden feels that the figgers I gives is probable a argiment in the gent's favor, which she sure shows by immediate sayin' with a smile that's cuttin' pityin' for our mule intellects:

"Well, he certain didn't throw more'n half of it away, did he?"

"Which I guess nobody but a fool would," I admits; "but"—I grabs at a straw that comes floatin' by—"he could sure easy cache it and dig up the plant per convenience."

"Just carry half of it round to hang himself on 'stead of leavin' it safe in that s'posed hidin'-place of yours?"

The way she curves her mouth and elevates her brows as she sort of careless laughs her words was not overflatterin' to my reasonin' powers. I'm a strugglin' for wind when she gives me a witherin' smile much as to say: "Don't try to argue back, for you ain't to blame for nature makin' a ignoramus out of you."

That look puts me out complete, for I realizes that if I makes any further attempt to arguin' Lignite's bein' guilty, I'm goin' to become *personer non grater* with the only eligible there is in the Bad Lands, which I certain wouldn't took chances on doin' at that portik'ler minute if every outlaw from Dakoty to Mexico was goin' to get free by my keepin' still.

But by this time she ain't payin' no further attention to me, havin' turned her head toward the s'posed felon, who she 'pears to be examinin' with a powerful lot of personal interest. And as far as a man can look attractive to a woman from the outside, he undoubted has

all the p'ints a female requires to hold her attention riveted almost indefinite.

Lignite is about a even six feet. Straight as a Norway pine, his brown h'ir is sort of waved round one of the cleanest-cut, man-handsome faces I ever sees in all my travels, which is some extensive. He stands inspection without a sign of flinchin', though I notices that when he first ketches her eye he starts almost like he thinks he's seen her before, and for a second or two his face has a puzzled frown, then a pekul'ar tickled smile plays about his lips as he stands intent watchin' her.

The girl's steady black eyes is fixed on him as though she's tryin' to read the truth in the blue-gray that's half-smilin' back at her, and which I admits look as clear and innocent as a child's. And guilty or not he's sure a mighty nervy gent. For, from the time we corrals him and insinooates that the chances is that he's goin' to take a star part in certain hangin' proceedin's which we has in mind considerable definite, he's never weakened or whimpered. His *sang frog* makes him a lot of admirers 'mong the boys, for on the Little Missouri there ain't nothin' rated higher than nerve—'ceptin' handsome women.

Lignite's held consistent and steady that it's his idee that even from a cattle-camp's p'int of view the evidence don't nowise warrant the stringin' of a stray gent who happens to be handy and might possible have turned the trick. But he's fair 'nough to admit that bein' some personal interested in the proceedin's they's a chance that his mental attitood ain't entire joodicial.

"My bank-roll is entire legitimate and regular," he explains when we inquires how he comes to be hooked up so strong. "I'm a-carryin' her so's to have the cash to pay for any chunk of land that I finds has a good seam of lignite on her."

He's been so eminent reasonable 'bout the whole thing that they's some of us more'n half doubtin' whether it's a entire square deal to stretch him without what you might call a little more direct evidence; though of course the rule in the Bad Lands, "that it's better to hang ten innocent men than let one guilty one escape," is *primer facier* considerable agin' him. But even at that we're a-waverin' more or less when the girl comes in on the play.

At last the roped gent laughs in a tone that's certain pleasin' to the ear:

"Well, Miss——" Then stops and looks inquirin'.

"Marvin," she smiles back, showin' a set of squirrel teeth which adds a allurin' charm to the rosy line that part hides 'em from sight.

When Lignite hears her name another curious flicker adds a few extry lines to the corners of his sun-wrinkled eyes.

"First name?" he asks laconic.

Now personal I regards this as powerful presumin', and I'm a-lookin' to see him get a settin' down on that'll remove the remnant of the pekul'ar smile that's worked its way to his smooth-shaved, thin lips. But what a female will or won't do ain't ever to be figured on special definite, and 'stead of freezin' him 'cordin' to my idee her face warms up with a ripple that they ain't none of us has the gall to try and appropriate.

"Mary—Mary Marvin."

Her tone is sure mighty sugary. Then her eyes sort of turn darker as she leans forward like she's sudden terrible s'prised and hardly more than whispers:

"And—yours?"

He hesitates like he's debatin' whether to tell her or not, then says distinct but rather low:

"Frank Wallace."

The blood comes rushin' up to her cheeks and she sort of ketches her breath 'fore openin' her lips to speak, but I sees him shake his head and he heads her off by laughin'.

"I has great confidence in a woman's intuitions, Miss Mary, and as you've been lookin' me over considerable searchin' I'm some curious to know whether you thinks I'm sufficient guilty to warrant these gents in stretchin' me?"

The look she gives him speaks more

voluminous than if she'd used the whole dictionary, and when she follers it with a positive, "I know you ain't," he laughs as gay as if he was thinkin' of immediate gettin' spliced 'stead of bein' hung.

"Well, I has an idee that by your droppin' in so providential and onexpected the boys is more'n likely to vote with you; but no matter how it comes out you're certain entire welcome to my keeridge, sech as it is, and"—his tone is jokin' facetious—"all I'm sorry for is that owin' to my bein' hawg-tied this-a-way, I can't go 'long to do the drivin'."

Swingin' her head round, Mary brushes back her black hair which has sort of tumbled down over her eyes, and turnin' on her hypnotic smile which we all feels is now meant for us individual, she gives us all a big s'prise by handin' us a few p'ints on cattle-country law, on which she's sure posted. She's certain a powerful and persuadin' talker, and I kin see that everybody's a-weakenin' fast as she goes along.

"'Less a man has a past record that's bad, the Range ain't no ways justified in hangin' him without it's proved definite that he's guilty of the partik'lar crime you charges him with."

Then her face flushes up, and she shows she's got plenty of fire stowed away in her hundred and twenty pounds by flamin':

"Why, boys, even in the Snake River country they wouldn't hang a dog charged with killin' sheep on the evidence you has agin'—Frank Wallace."

She glances at him as she quits and seems to be mighty pleased at the look he gives her, though the way she's stated the case has made most of us feel some small and shrunk up.

They's a embarrassin' silence follers, which is gettin' oppressive awkward when some gent breaks it by hollerin' that he moves we adjourns the hearin' and escorts the lady *en masse* to the ranch. This idee proves entire popular, though the motion's amended by some feller proposin' that, Mary consentin', we takes the keno-bottle and draws numbers to see who has the honor of occupyin' the seat with her and doin' the drivin'.

She smiles gorgeous that she's agreeable on condition that the gent we has been thinkin' of elevatin' is 'lowed to come into the game same as the rest. There's some protestin' agin' this, but when she says decided that otherwise she'll do her own handlin' of the ribbons everybody sees plain that her idee is eminent fair.

Then Mary offers to do the drawin', which sure tickles us tremendous, and I sends for the keno-bottle and suggests that we all go inside so that she can set in the lookout and conduct the drawin' handy and convenient.

"Which is certain a good idee," bubbles Mary, springin' out 'fore I gets a chance to help her, which onexpected activity on her part is considerable disapp'intin' to me.

Headin' the bunch she walks into the saloon, but don't apparent take any notice of Wallace who bends his head over like he's tryin' to whisper to her.

As she hops into the lookout 'side of the faro layout, we all lines up opposite along my imitation-walnut bar, waitin' for her to open the excitin' game.

"How many want to draw?" inquires Mary, with a fetchin' smile, a-shakin' the balls as innocent as a baby playin' with its first rattle.

I runs my chiny optics over the line-up and announces thirty-eight, a-includin' the s'posed outlaw who she's declared in on the deal.

"And a-excludin' me," growls my barkeep.

"And me, too," dittoes my bank-dealer, cold and threatenin'.

"Which there ain't no freckled-faced, carrot-headed, Irish gin-mill proprietor that ever maintains a gilded palace of vice sech as this," continers that insultin' liquor-handler, lookin' over my plain but sufficient-for-the-purpose furnishin's with contemptous meanin', "who kin eliminate me from this game, and retain the best expert mixer of the worst ingredients ever furnished to a self-respectin' compounder to work off

on a onsuspectin' commoonity as somethin' worth payin' real money for."

I'm so s'prised by these p'inted and disrespectful comments that I fails to hobble the right words to proper express my views, which hiatus is took advantage of by the dealer, who comes in on the play with iced-blue eyes by sayin' bitter and freezin':

"Which sentiments as expressed by my feller worker in this graft vineyard is mine *in toter*, but I adds on my own account, that while I has spent the best years of my life a-endeavorin' to deal for the house so that a honest box is made plumb useless and ineffective; and while I has heretofore been entire satisfied with the lay I has in your game, I hands it to you straight that I'm included in the comin' lottery or I hereby jumps my job and declares myself a free American citizen subject to nobody's meanness but my own."

The crowd roars, and course these ultimatums simple forces me to amend my tally, which I does by tryin' to joke the thing through.

"My 'tention, miss," I grins facetious, embarrassed, "havin' been polite called to a slight mistake in enumeratin', I finds on revisin' the figgers that they's just a even forty."

The girl's black eyes is sparklin' with amoozement as she ripples:

"Well, then, I'll just keep forty balls in the bottle, and as I draw 'em out I'll hand each one a number beginning at the ice-box at the lower end of the bar."

When she gets the numbers right she gurgles:

"Number one to win; and seein' Mr. Wallace still has his hands tied so he can't use them, I guess the best way to do is to make his ball the last one left in the bottle."

She waits a instant, and as they ain't no objection she shakes and draws a number which she hands to the gent who steps up from the ice-box. It's understood that nobody is to look at their ball till the thirty-nine are out, then they're to be called off beginnin' at the head of the line and so on down till the winner shows up. When the drawin' finishes the first gent peeks at his ticket; with a mighty disapp'inted look he pulls at his droopin' sandy mustache and sort of growls:

"Hoodoo thirteen."

The callin' runs down the line to two of us, but the lucky number ain't put in an appearance none whatever. It's become a cinch that the prize is in one of our itchin' fists or is reposin' peaceful in the bottle which is bein' fondled by the slim little hands of the lady, who I now begins to have a hunch has possible been handlin' that keno device as well as the best manipulator that ever shakes it in the interest of the house.

The gent next to me seems to be sort of struck by the same idee, for he looks sudden intelligent at Mary a second, then runs his fingers through his long black hair and grins at Lignite:

"Want to trade?"

But that self-complacent, gray-eyed outlaw shakes his head and laughs:

"I always plays my own hand to the limit when I has confidence that I ain't got none the worst of the deal."

And the speculative gent combs his stragglin' whiskers thoughtful for a second 'fore sighin: "Number ten."

Course by this time I'm willin' to gamble the check-rack that the winner's in the bottle, but it's too late to make a kick and I displays—forty.

Mary stands there with a set of smiles racin' over her face and chasin' each other from the corners of her little red mouth up to her shinin' black eyes and into her crow-wing hair that would certain have won first money in an amoozement contest. And for which I don't blame her none whatever, for I've theretofore seen a lot of crestfallen gents in games various, but nothin' that's a marker to the way we all looks when we realizes positive how beautiful we've been cold-decked. But her laughin' is so entire good-natured that we all joins in on it contagiouslike.

Then Mary shows she knows how to play the game complete by callin' out:

"Now that chance has selected the man who's to drive for me"—her smile starts another roar, which final simmers down, and she goes on laughin'—"I

guess you'd better untie him for I feels sure he'll know what's proper after winnin' out on a forty-to-one shot."

Then she gives us all a bewilderin' smile which lingers significant on Lignite, who gives a understandin' nod, and she gathers up her gray skirt from a pair of heart-disturbin' ankles, that twinkle in their smooth, rounded coverin's for a lot too brief a instant as she hops to the floor, and flys through the door to gather up her traps.

I'm havin' heart-flurries to that extent I'm substantial daffy; but I manages to get out my knife and slit the rope.

Stretchin' his arms to limber 'em, Lignite perduces the bank-roll that I'm former ignorant enough to consider evidence agin' him. Strippin' off a wrapper that carries two ciphers, he hands it to me and grins whimsical:

"I ain't tryin' to bribe the jury none whatever, but I wants you all to drink sociable same as you would with airy other gent, who makes sech a"—he purses his thin lips and his gray eyes sparkle humorous as he kind of drawls —"*onusual* lucky play."

And long 'fore that far-seein' female steps to the door and inquires childlike if it ain't 'bout time we're a-startin', the threatenin' cloud which was hangin' over that s'posed outlaw has thinned down, under the mellerin' influence of good-fellership, to total invisibility.

"I kain't nowise figure out, Red," a converted gent whispers to me confidential as we're a-takin' a final round, "how we ever makes sech a idiotic play. Why, damn it, Red," he continers, gettin' more enthusiasm out of what he's just swallered, "this here Lignite's a—a prince; and you kin take it from me straight, that if they ain't another weddin' in Hell's Kitchen under hurry orders they ain't no sech thing in my 'pinion as love at first sight."

I has a private notion that it ain't a genuine case of "first sight," but not bein' nowise positive I don't say anything. The talkative gent wants to continer his remarks but Mary sticks her head inside again just at that second and, knowin' he may liquor out somethin' embarrassin' to her, I chokes him off by hollerin':

"Everybody outside immediate, for this joint's closin' down indefinite."

But 'fore any one has time to break away Wallace jumps onto the faro-table and, wavin' his long arms, calls for silence. In a instant you could hear my old round-face clock sort of merry tickin' on its hook over the pine backbar, as it kind of sly-winks down at Mary, as though it's a-invitin' her to come in and draw cards in the deal which is 'bout to be made.

The girl stands a second half-frownin', like she's a-debatin' whether to accept the invite or back out. She looks at Wallace inquirin', and he grins humorous.

"I'm a-goin' to turn a buried card or two for these gents, and it pleases me a whole lot if you'll take the lookout and keep cases on the game."

I has a idee that she part suspects what that smilin' prior outlaw is thinkin' of sayin', but I don't believe that he himself even dreams of makin' the sort of play he ultimate does. She hesitates a second, then her slim fingers busies theirselves a-straightenin' a few wanderin' black locks, and the next tick she's a-overlookin' the layout.

Heretofore she ain't showed a sign of nervousness, but now she acts as though she's considerable rattled; but she sets there bitin' at her red lips like she's made up her mind to go on with the game if it kills her. Lignite gives her a kind of reassurin' smile which colors her cheeks, but seems to brace her up a good deal; then he turns his tanned face to the crowd.

"Boys"—his tone is jokin' facetious —"I thinks that with a eye to the futoore I better let you see all the cards I claims to hold immediate."

And then his voice gets more seriouslike. "When the stage pulls in a spell ago I regards it as close to even money whether I'm goin' to see the sun rise to-morrer mornin'. But when I catches a full sight of the girl that's settin' here by me I knows the odds in my favor has decided improved, for I recognizes her as my old partner's sister. I don't

say nothin' at the time 'cause I gets curious to see if she'll remember me. Then, when I sees she does know me, I considers that you've all had some considerable amoozement out of me, and so I figures to have a little fun out of it myself. And, boys"—his grin is positive aggravatin'—"I assures you that I considers you don't owe me a white chip on that score."

Then he pauses like he's sudden struck by a new notion, but's debatin' whether to say anything, though he final makes up his mind to go ahead.

"But while I feels that we're square one way, I certain owes you a whole lot another."

"How's that?" hollers some gent who's crazy curious for rapid action.

"Because," laughs Lignite, "I been a-lookin' for Lucky and Mary ever since I gets back from Australia two years ago; and it's a hundred to one that if you hadn't figured me for a hold-up gent, I'd never found the girl" —glancin' at Mary who sort of cups her face in her hands—"who promises to marry me when she's a-wearin' mighty short dresses."

Then he bends over her and whispers low, but in a tone that's powerful persuasive:

"And you're a goin' to keep that little-girl promise—ain't you, Mary?"

We couldn't none of us hear what she answers, but they ain't no reason to s'pose that Lignite's at all oneasy over the result final, for that shameless gent sudden flings his arms around her and gives her a smack that temporary makes me almost wish I had official hurried proceedin's, and stretched him 'fore the stage arrives bearin' the bunch of loveliness that's makin' a onavalin' struggle to get away from his public caressin'.

DISTANCE

WE have clasped hands again, ah, true,
We have no quarrel—that is done—
But nevermore beneath the sun
Comes back to me that friend I knew.

We shall break bread together; men
May mark no difference in our ways,
But only through my yesterdays
The friend I loved shall walk again.

We have forgiven—act and speech
Have proved it. Who shall then surmise
That space between our hearts that lies
Unbridged—beyond all sound or reach?

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

The DEVIL and the SHARK

By Quentin M. Drake



ELECTRIC bulbs in colored shades lighted four great mess-tents, thrown into one. The room thus formed was lined with flags and bunting. Banks of palms and flowers made screens, behind one of which the orchestra, of regimental bandsmen, was softly playing. Other banks concealed nooks, with room for two, which this evening were even more popular than such places usually are. A little salt breeze came under the rolled tent walls, and the distant sound of a low surf made a whispered accompaniment to the music.

The big, semi-tropical, canvas city of Camp Buford was a great change from sleepy old Fort San Nicolas, where for so long I had been the post quartermaster. There the life, outside the regular military routine, was almost pastoral; here the war-cloud's shadow brought movement, feverish preparation, suppressed excitement, together with hopes or fears as the case might be. It was the twenty-fifth of April, 1898, Philly's sixteenth birthday, in honor of which her grandfather, my old friend Redfield, colonel of the 93d U. S. Cavalry, was giving a dance.

The guests had arrived with military promptness. Even before the hour set, many country "hacks," army ambulances, spring wagons, and even wagons of the ordinary farm variety, lined with straw and laden with women—none was quartered in the camp—drove up and emptied at the door of the dressing-tent, and the room began to fill with bright feminine costumes and uniforms of snowy white. Near the door stood old Redfield, tall and handsome as ever, and only a little more gray, receiving the people as they came. As I entered, I noticed that he looked troubled, and glanced uneasily at the watch buckled around his wrist.

"What can have become of that child?" he demanded irritably, as he shook hands with me. "Time after time I've sent over to my tent—it's double, and she's elected to stay there for the present, in spite of orders—but the only answer I can get is that she'll 'be here directly.' It's outrageous—an insult to our guests! Upon my word, if it wasn't her birthday, I think I'd——"

I laughed and left him. All Philly's life, save for the last three years, when, as we were stationed in different places, I had seen little of him, I had known him to talk in this way. It is possible that at some remote period he may have carried out his threat and punished her, but if there ever was such an occasion, I never heard of it. And really, there was no use in his fretting then. It was still some time before the hour set.

In a corner that commanded a view of the room, I saw Brinsley, a captain of the 93d, hard on his majority. There was a vacant camp-stool beside him, and I took it. I like sometimes to talk with Brinsley. He is so pessimistic and honestly cynical that he amuses and

cheers me. He greeted me with a grunt, and for a time said nothing, but sat looking out at the people who now were arriving fast.

" 'There was a sound of revelry by night,' " he quoted, after a little. "It'll be amusing, colonel, looking on this evening. One will be able to see men and women more or less as they are, with raw human nature sticking out like bristles—very like bristles, in most cases."

"Why especially to-night?" I asked.

"Every one will be off his or her guard, just as they probably were at the Duchess of Richmond's ball," he replied promptly. "It's the excitement, of course, and the feeling that all the men here are going on a journey from which a lot of 'em won't return. It's true enough. And a good job, too, in many instances."

"In those of your immediate superiors, for example?" I inquired ironically.

"No," he answered, with a grin. "I wasn't thinking of them. I don't have to. The way they're increasing the army, I'm probably as safe for my gilt oak leaves as you are for those brand-new silver ones you've already mounted."

"The wires have been down for five days and more, now, so we haven't heard a thing of what's going on, for no mail has come," I retorted, rather ungraciously, for his cock-sureness exasperated me. "By this time, for aught we know, the row is patched up and there won't be any war. But who were you thinking of?"

"You know little Fanny Traill, don't you?" he asked in reply.

"I did when she was a child," I responded. "Why?"

"There she is, over there by that bunch of palms. Look at her."

I did look. It had not been so very long since Fanny was a child, and except that she now wore long skirts, she might have been one still as far as appearance went. She sat looking at the door, watching each person that entered, with a look of utter misery and apprehension on her pretty, infantile face, of which I would not have believed it capable. It hurt me to see her, and I felt very angry with Brinsley for pointing her out to me. It is beastly for a person to obtrude a sight such as that upon one, when there is nothing that can be done to help.

"Not much concealment of emotion there, is there?" Brinsley went on, before I could think of anything sufficiently severe to say. "She's eating her poor little heart out waiting for young Preston, the unutterable little ass. I never gave Freddy Preston credit for having enough brains to hurt him any, but I did think he had enough to see what a prize he'd won out when he got Fanny. She has a little money, too, so they could have got along nicely. He has a second lieutenant's pay, an empty head, and a man-eating brute of a black horse, appropriately called The Devil, with a record of a leg, two arms, two collar-bones, and the neck of a Mexican who tried to steal him. I thought—we all did—that Freddy was a good, clean-cut boy. The whole regiment was as glad when he and Fanny finally managed to attain what every one else knew for weeks was inevitable, as it was sorry that the Mexican didn't succeed in taking the horse with him to the place where he went. They've been engaged only for a month or so—and now look at her!"

"It's only a lovers' quarrel, probably. I hardly think there's any occasion to take that so seriously. I've seen 'em before," I remarked, much relieved.

"It's nothing of the sort," contradicted Brinsley flatly. "It's Freddy. Now, the only thing in this wicked world that Freddy can do more than ordinarily well is to ride, but lately he's acquired a notion that he can play poker, also, and he's trying to prove it. It's expensive, but he persists. It's that beggar Flanders who's to blame. The Shark, as they call him."

"Flanders? The Shark?" I said interrogatively. The names were strange to me.

"Yes, Flanders. Civilian appointment—political. Been in the service

but a month or two—and wouldn't be in it any longer if I could prove what I'm morally sure; that he makes certain games that are supposed to contain an element of chance into games entirely of skill—and he has the skill. He's lots older than the other pup lieutenants. Lots older than the records show, I fancy. He has an unlimited influence over those boys, and a very bad one it is. There isn't anything, to hear them tell it, that he can't do better than any one else. That's the reason they call him The Shark—though his face may have something to do with it. If I had proof, I'd prefer charges, but I haven't any proof of anything, except that these young donkeys admire him, are proud to be seen with him, and let him win more money than they can afford. He seems especially to favor young Preston."

"Why, do you suppose?" I asked.

"Wants to get him under his thumb, I fancy. Probably so that he'll neglect Fanny and distress her, as the young ass has done to-night. Probably Flanders would like her for himself. He prides himself on being a lady-killer, I believe. Here he comes, now, with his satellites at his heels."

As he spoke, a group of young men entered the room together. Nearly all of them were known to me, and nearly all, though still perfectly presentable, were evidently flushed with wine, or, more probably, high-balls. All, except Freddy, seemed in high spirits. His face was set, and as miserable as Fanny's own. But though, with an appealing look at him, she half-started from her chair, he turned his face away and passed on. Though I could see that it cost him an effort to do it, she evidently could not. Her face seemed actually to age as she dropped back in her seat, so drawn and despairing it was. I could have kicked Freddy with all the good-will in the world.

From what Brinsley had said, I at once recognized their leader as Flanders. He was tall and well made. His face was not ill-looking, but its receding chin and very white, prominent teeth certainly did put one in mind of the fish from which his nickname was taken.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked Brinsley, with a sardonic grin.

"I don't fancy him," I answered conservatively.

"He's the very worst sort that curses the army, and that's quite unnecessarily bad," said he positively. "I wonder what he's done to that Preston child that makes him behave in that way. I'm afraid I've misjudged Freddy. It would take something more than Flanders' mere say-so to make him turn his back on—listen!"

As he spoke there came a general hush. Even the music hesitated and then stopped, one instrument after another. Faint in the distance, from the direction of division headquarters, came the sound of cheering. At the same instant the flags that curtained the doorway were snatched apart, and Philly darted into the room.

I fairly gasped. Of course I had all along been aware, in a vague sort of way, that Philly was growing up. But for all that, until then she was to me as she had always been; an utterly unmanageable imp that from the time she was a tiny baby, newly orphaned, gazing solemnly at a strange world, I had loved as only a lonely old bachelor can care for another's child. When her image crossed my mind, I had thought of her as a wild slip of a girl, long and bony of leg and arm, occasionally toothless, with wonderful dark eyes and a mop of dusky hair.

This creature that I saw was another being. I can't describe the frock she wore; there are some mysteries into which it is well that man should not pry, and technicalities of this sort stand high among them. But it was of some thin, black stuff, with a sash of deep crimson, and something crimson underneath that showed when she ran, which matched the heels of her little, black satin slippers. To my intense surprise, neither her arms nor the little of her neck that showed, were bony in the least; they were rounded and colored like ivory. Her hair, piled on top of her head and skewered there with

a high comb, had a red rose stuck in it. Though it may have been true, as some women afterward told me, that she was dressed in a manner entirely unsuitable for so young a girl, it is certain that no costume ever clothed a much lovelier one.

In one hand she held an envelope, waving it wildly above her head. Without paying the slightest attention to any one else, she danced up to her grandfather.

"It's a telegram, Dad's Dad!" she cried. "I took it away from the orderly as I came in the door. Read it out. I'm sure there's news in it!"

"Philly!" said her grandfather reprovingly.

Philly stamped her foot.

"I know. I haven't spoken to anybody, yet. I'll do that afterward. But there isn't a soul in this room that wouldn't rather hear the news, if there is any, than to say 'how d'you do' to me. Read it! I can't stand it another minute!"

Deliberately Redfield took the envelope, looking the while in stern reproof at his granddaughter. Philly jumped up and down and clapped her hands. So, with a sigh, he gave up his little attempt at correction as he had done hundreds of times before. He fumbled with his eye-glasses, and slowly tearing open the envelope, he read the contents through once — twice. Philly's short supply of patience gave out utterly.

"What is it? What *is* it?' Read it! Quick, Dad's Dad—or I will!"

Gently he put her aside, cleared his throat, and for the first time in the quarter-century of our acquaintance, his voice trembled as he spoke.

"This copy of a telegram comes, through division headquarters, from Washington," said he. "It states that five days ago the President signed the resolution acknowledging the independence of Cuba; that on the following day Mr. Woodford, our minister to Spain, was given his passports, and that today Congress has declared that a state of war, since the former date, has existed. To the copy of the telegram is appended the order that this regiment shall hold itself ready to move at six hours' notice."

For a second there was dead silence; then arose a cheer that caused the bunting on the walls to tremble. It died away, to be repeated again and again. It was taken up by the enlisted men, who evidently had gotten wind of something and were waiting outside. In a mighty wave of sound it rolled back from the ballroom and down the troop streets, until even the prisoners in the guard-tent stamped on the board floor and yelled themselves hoarse.

Philly, who had jumped on a chair and was leading the noise, suddenly was struck by an idea. Leaping to the ground, she ran to the screen that concealed the orchestra. She tore it aside, and seating herself at the piano, with all her might began to rattle off "The Girl I Left Behind Me." A piccolo cut in, and the two snare-drums rattled like mad. The cheering broke out again, more wildly than before, and this time even Brinsley joined it—even I did. In the middle of it all, I saw Mrs. Greenough, the senior major's wife, rise, and with an evident effort to control herself, hurry from the room.

"Stop! Silence, I say!" barked Redfield. The music and the cheering ceased.

"What a thoughtlessly selfish lot of brutes we are!" growled Brinsley, deeply disgusted with himself for having given evidence of some ordinary human feeling, like the rest of the world. "We utterly forgot that because that old woman is something of a frump to look at, she has feelings inside her instead of baled forage, as might appear to the casual observer. Everybody in the regiment has heard that story a thousand times. When she was comparatively young she saw her father and two brothers march away to that air, and none of the three ever returned." He sulked away, to solace himself at the punch-bowl.

It was some time before the dancing began. Every one was talking excitedly over the great news, and no attempt was made to open the dance in the

ordinary manner; every one, even Redfield, seemed to consider that Philly already had done all that was necessary in this way. The people gathered largely in couples. Here and there groups of officers were defeating Spain, each according to his own ideas. I stopped where I was, still watching the poor little drama to which Brinsley had called my attention.

Fanny had risen from her seat with the rest, when the cheering began, but I am convinced that she did not know why. War or peace, it was all the same to her, just then, and the shock seemed to have stunned her, in a way. She saw nothing, apparently, even when Philly, coming alone down the room, tripping in time to the music, stopped and looked inquiringly in her pale, troubled face.

Philly's big eyes took in everything, as they always did. I saw them search the room and settle on Freddy, where he stood with clenched fists hanging by his sides and looking steadfastly upon the floor at his feet. With a coquetry that was quite new to her, and an ease that might have been shown by a belle of many seasons, she eluded the men who were pursuing her, programs in hand, and walked straight up to young Preston.

"Really, Freddy, I don't think it's at all nice of you!" I heard her say in the fresh young voice that carried through the room. "Here at my birthday dance, the only one I've ever had since we were children, I promise you the first waltz, and you go and forget all about it."

Now, as a matter of fact, when the dance first was decided upon, Philly, much against my will—for it was more years than I cared to count since I had done anything of that sort—had elected to have the first waltz with me. Freddy started as though some one had struck him; but he was a gentleman, and he knew that private woes must need give way before the inexorable rules of civilized society. Then, too, Philly's grandfather was his colonel, though I really do not believe he thought of that. He tried to force a smile as he offered his arm and was led away, through the door and under the moonlit palms outside.

Fanny, for the first time, took notice then. A flood of color swept over her face and retreated, leaving it ghastly. I saw her fingers tighten on her fan until the ivory sticks snapped. I laughed a little as I noticed it, partly because I thought that anything that roused Fanny would be good for her just then; partly because her action was an involuntary tribute to the new Philly. The day before, Fanny would probably have thought as soon of being jealous of a babe in arms.

A moment later The Shark, as they called him, came up to her and bowed, showing his sharp white teeth more than ever. What actresses women are! From their very cradles they seem to have the gift of dissimulation. This girl, who a moment before had been tragedy incarnate, for all who would to see, now pulled herself together without a visible effort, smiled naturally, and rose with flattering readiness. In another second she was gliding about the floor in Flanders' arms.

For three dances in succession Fanny beamed on The Shark, as they called him, and for the same time Philly's partners who, army-fashion, had filled her program in advance, sought her in vain. It was not until the music stopped at the end of the third number that they appeared. Freddy, glancing to neither right nor left, walked directly into the room, but Philly was claimed by Flanders.

Crimson with rage, Fanny turned away, and before any attempt to take her to a seat could be made, she left them together. Well pleased with his prowess, The Shark looked after her with a grin that would have made any decent man long with all his heart to slap the face that wore it.

Flanders danced well—that much must be admitted; but though Philly until then had not been on the floor, she only circled the room once or twice, and then, as she came near to the place where I sat, she stopped, and sank down on the stool next mine.

"I'm hot and I'm thirsty," she announced. "Go get me an ice, please. I know they're not serving them yet, but tell them it's for me, and I think they'll give you one. I'll wait here."

Flanders would have remonstrated, but thought better of it and departed. Philly drew a sigh of relief.

"Pig!" said she.

The remark, I knew, was not addressed to me, and I made no attempt to answer it. But I saw that Philly was winking hard as though to keep back tears, and that there was a pathetic little droop at the corners of her mouth. I took her hand and patted it.

"What's the matter, Philly, girl?" I asked. "Aren't you having as good a time as you hoped?"

Her eyes filled, then. "It's all horrid —*horrid!*" she replied, with a little catch in her voice. "And I thought it was going to be so—so different. I've been looking forward so long to my first real ball. Dad's Dad wouldn't have let me have it now, I know, if he hadn't thought that with the war coming on, he might not—might not be with me on my next birthday. But I wanted to forget that for this evening. I wanted to be happy and have every one else so just for to-night. But the harder I try the worse it gets, for myself and every one else."

"My dear, if it's Fanny and that young donkey, Freddy Preston, that makes you unhappy, you're very foolish," I ventured. "They'll patch it up again, right enough. It's only a lovers' quarrel, and when you're a little older, you'll find that they're not as serious as they seem."

"But it isn't a lovers' quarrel," cried Philly. "I thought it was at first, but it isn't. It's—he's given her up. He hasn't told her so yet; he hasn't sand, but he's going to write it to her so that she'll get it in the morning. I couldn't make him promise not to. He's ruined, he says, in honor and money and everything else."

"Ruined? Nonsense!" I said soothingly. "The young idiot has been playing cards and losing more than he can afford, I suppose. That isn't ruin, my dear. It's a rather good thing, if he takes it as a lesson. He'll have to economize for a bit, that's all, and he can do it on active service. He'll feel differently in the morning."

"But it isn't only just 'more than he can afford,'" persisted Philly. "He's been doing that for some time, and then doing it more hoping to get even. But to-night it came all at once—in one hand, I think. It's eight hundred dollars. And Freddy hasn't it. He hasn't anything—except The Devil."

I quite started; she uttered the last words so explosively. Then I recollected the horse.

"He's worth more than that—I mean The Devil is—and Freddy offered to give him over for the debt, but that horrid Shark man wouldn't take him. Said he needed the money—and he's rolling in money. That's the reason Freddy says he can't in honor allow Fanny to tie her life to his. Because he's disgraced, and can't even go with the regiment when it leaves—though I don't see how he's going to help that, do you?—for a debt like that must be paid within a day. Is that true?"

"It's the custom," I admitted. "Still, in a case of this kind, time must be given. Why, it will amount to a court martial if Flanders presses his claim for such a debt."

Philly nodded comprehendingly. Brought up in the service as she had been, she knew military law as well as I did.

"That's what I told him, but he knew it already," she said. "It's for that very reason he can't delay. Because the other man is so helpless. He says he's got to make good, one way or another. That's just the way he said it: 'I must make good, and I will—one way or another.' He said it as though he was talking to himself; not to me. What did he mean?"

"Is this horse of his really as black as he's painted, Philly?" I asked, evading a direct answer.

"I'm afraid he is," said Philly, shaking her head. "He couldn't be painted much blacker than he is—not in any way. Freddy can ride him, of course,

and I've made friends with him, but—oh! I never thought of that!"

"Never thought of what?" I demanded. I had no doubt that Philly had made friends with the brute. She could make friends, I think, with any animal that ever wore horse-hide. She had a heaven-sent gift that way, that in her early childhood had been cultivated by the most competent teacher I ever knew. I scented danger in this sudden thought of hers. "Never thought of what?" I repeated.

"Nothing," she answered hastily. "What did Freddy mean when he said——"

"My dear," I said, coming to a sudden decision, "I am not a mind-reader, and even if I were, I'd find it rather difficult to answer that question. But if you see Freddy again, tell him to come to me the first thing to-morrow morning. I'll take over the debt, and see that he gets time to pay it, if it's necessary. Then tell him to go and grovel before that poor little girl, and get her to forgive him if he can."

Philly squeezed my hand gratefully. "That's sweet of you, Daddy Quentin," she said, with a watery little smile. "It's like you, too. I hope it won't be necessary. I don't believe it will, somehow. I can't very well tell Freddy, though. He'd know then I must have talked with you about it, and you see, I promised I wouldn't tell any one," she owned shamelessly. "I won't tell any one else. But I had to know things, and of course I couldn't go to Dad's Dad—he's their K. O."

She was silent for a moment; then, in a burst of confidence, leaned close to me, her eyes overflowing.

"Of course I'll see this through; they're my friends," she said. "I thought it would be so nice to grow up, if it was only for one night. But it's the unhappiest thing I ever did. Why, even Fanny was mean to me. She seemed to think that I wanted to——"

Philly stopped short, and instantly her real self disappeared.

"It's *so* good of you to take all that trouble for me, Mr. Flanders," she said, with winning sweetness. "I see a couple of vacant chairs over on the other side. Shall we go there and sit down?"

The Shark leered engagingly as he led the way to the seats that Philly had indicated. When they had gone I also left my place. I was uneasy about that Preston boy. A debt of eight hundred dollars to be paid at once by a subaltern living on an income, undoubtedly already mortgaged, of fifteen hundred a year, was nearly as hopeless a task as though it had been eight millions. Moreover, those words of his which Philly had repeated to me meant more, I feared, than I would admit when speaking to the child. I knew that a lad of his kidney, fresh from the sheltered life of West Point, with all a clean-bred boy's exaggerated notions of honor, would, in the self-abasement attending his first slip, be very likely indeed to do some exceedingly foolish thing; a thing, perhaps, that one would not care to think of. For Fanny's sake as well as his own I resolved to prevent anything of the sort. Therefore I went in search of him.

I found him at the punch-bowl with a group of his fellows; all of them talking loudly and laughing with unnatural frequency, and Freddy more so than any of the others. He was drinking recklessly; Redfield's punch is not a thing to tamper with lightly, and the unaccustomed liquor was having its effect. To stop his drinking without creating a scene would probably have been impossible. And then, under the circumstances I was not entirely sure that I wanted to do so just then. What I did want was to keep him, safe from himself, until I could get at him in the morning, and this, when once he got in bed, the punch was quite capable of doing.

Selecting a spot from which I could keep an eye on him, I sat down there.

A quadrille was forming at the time, and hardly had I settled myself, when I saw Philly and The Shark coming to join the set nearest me. Their conversation seemed largely in the nature of a monologue by Flanders, on the subject of himself, as well as I could judge

by his expansive manner. Philly listened with what appeared to be breathless interest. Then they came so near that I could not help but hear him.

"Yes," he was saying, "all I want now is another mount—a good one. If we're going to Cuba, it'll be impossible to get anything at all, unless I bought a plug from the quartermaster. And of course I wouldn't care to do that."

"Of course not," agreed Philly. "Have you found one yet to suit you?"

Now, as a matter of fact, if the regiment was sent to Cuba, the chances were that it would go dismounted; a fact of which Philly undoubtedly was perfectly well aware. I could not understand what she was driving at, then. But if Philly knew this, Flanders evidently did not.

"No, not yet," he replied. "There's nothing worth having around here—nothing with blood in it. I shall get leave if I can and go to Louisville and have a look."

"There's one horse here that I should think might suit even you," she said innocently. I began to get her drift, then. "I mean that black of Freddy Preston's. He's thoroughbred, and I happen to know that Freddy is willing to let him go at something under what he is really worth."

Flanders laughed, but it was not a very genuine laugh. "Not for me," he said. "I'm not buying man-eaters. Preston has managed to tame him, but no one else can ride the beast. And mighty proud of that fact Preston is. It's a safe bluff that he makes when he offers to sell."

"Some people tumble out of bed," she replied carelessly. "From what I've seen of him he doesn't seem to me so impossible to ride."

The music started, the partners saluted, and their conversation for the time was stopped. I smiled to myself at Philly's little plan, so evidently a foredoomed failure, to dispose of The Devil, but then I saw another matter that demanded my attention, and which drove it out of my head.

For the moment the group around the punch-bowl had melted away, leaving Freddy alone. He was seated, staring with owlish solemnity at nothing. I went over and touched his shoulder.

"My boy," I said as he looked up, "you've had enough of this. You're best in bed."

He had not seen me before since he was a schoolboy, and did not recognize me, but he did recognize my shoulder-straps. The habit of discipline is strong; he struggled to his feet, followed me obediently as I led him under the rolled walls of the ballroom tent, and then preceded me to his own. Without once looking around to see me watch him, he undressed, fell on his cot, and was fast asleep at once.

It lifted a weight from my mind, which was still further lightened when, on returning to the ballroom, I found that Fanny had gone home some time before. With a headache, they said. I also had a headache, and followed her example.

When, next morning, I was bathed and dressed, reveille had not yet blown. I sent word to Preston's troop street that as soon as he was awake and ready I wanted to see him, and was hurrying through my coffee. There came the sound of hurrying hoofs behind, and a cry of warning from my "striker" which made me spring to my feet. Then I saw that Philly, mounted on a huge black horse, was rushing toward us at a speed that, away from a race-course, I never saw equaled.

Her mount I never had seen before, but there was no mistaking him, even at the first glance. He was a magnificent thoroughbred, black as night, and standing well over sixteen hands.

There would not be two such horses in the camp. But had there been any doubt, The Devil at once identified himself. With Philly vainly sawing at his mouth, he was bolting straight toward my tent as though he would tear through it. But no horse, not mad with fright, will run into a barrier, however flimsy, that is far too high to leap. Bracing his hoofs he stopped short; then began to buck, as only thoroughbreds and broncos can. Philly sat on

his back as a mussel clings to a rock. Both the striker and I ran forward. He gripped the bit. Instantly The Devil reared and struck, and I saw the khaki blouse of my servant fly open, so narrowly did the iron shoe miss him. At the same moment I grasped Philly's waist and lifted her from the saddle. Very seldom had I utterly lost patience with Philly, but I did then, and shook her soundly as I held her in the air.

"You must be crazy!" said I. "What you need is a good spanking, and though I don't suppose your grandfather will give it to you, I'm going to give him the chance—and this very minute."

"No. Let me down—quick!" she said, so earnestly that I paused. "Listen, Daddy Quentin. I had to ride him. It was the only way. I was afraid Freddy wouldn't take your money. Men are so queer about some things—I don't understand it. Last night I made up my mind to sell the horse. And I have. I went out riding with him—The Shark—this morning. And he was ashamed to be afraid of The Devil when he saw me ride him. I thought he would be, and he was. So he bought him, and I made him pay me right then. Then, when I started for here, all of a sudden it came to me what Freddy meant about making good one way or another. So I pushed The Devil and he got away from me. My skirt fretted him, anyhow; he never was ridden with one before. But I was afraid I might be too late. So take it to him. Please! Now!"

Her words came tumbling over each other in their haste, but I grasped what she meant. As she finished, and fumbling in her bodice, extracted a wad of bills which she forced into my hand, I remembered that it had been a long time since I had sent for young Preston. Of course nothing had happened, or I would have heard of it, but as Philly implied, something might at any moment. Grasping the money tightly, I took my somewhat portly form along much faster than it was accustomed to go, and so soon arrived, rather short of breath, at Freddy's troop street.

The flap of the tent was down, and I scratched at it as convention required, but without waiting for an answer, I lifted it and entered.

Freddy was sitting at a table, sealing an envelope. A large sheet of paper, loosely scrawled upon, lay on the table before him, and under it he hastily thrust something as I came in, at the same time lifting to mine the most haggard and hunted face I had ever seen.

The sheet of paper lay directly under my eyes, and I saw the heading: "To Whom It May Concern." I lifted it, and underneath I found what I expected then—a pistol. I took it, and putting it on a camp-stool, sat down upon it for safe-keeping. And very uncomfortable it was.

There was no scene; it was far too serious for that, and somehow the lecture that rose to my lips did not seem to fit. For perhaps half a minute we sat there in silence, which at last I broke.

"It was a most idiotic thing that you were about to do, Freddy," I said, very quietly. "You yourself best know what grief it would have caused. And besides, there wasn't the slightest excuse for it. The horse is sold. If he wasn't, it would have been all the same. But he is. Philly sold him. To Flanders. Here." And I shoved the wad of bills into the hand that was nearest me.

He looked vaguely at them for a moment, as though he did not grasp what they meant.

"To Flanders," he repeated, after a little. "Flanders! I should like to see him up on The Devil."

He laughed hysterically, and then, without the slightest warning, threw his head forward on his arms and cried—cried with great sobs as men do on the rare occasions when they weep; sobs that fairly racked his body.

I waited for the storm to pass. Reveille blew, and afterward, one by one, the minutes went by, it seemed to me interminably. It is most trying to see a man—a real man, which, after all, Freddy was—break down like that. But at last his sobs began to lessen in their violence, and before they had finished I

rose. I knew that he would not want to lift his face while I was there.

"It's all right now, isn't it, Freddy?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Very well. Here's your gun," I said, laying it on the table. "Burn those papers you wrote; don't tear them. You'd better give your face a scrub, then. You won't have any too much time before parade." And with that I left him.

"Is it all right?" asked Philly eagerly, as I returned.

"All right?" I repeated in a tone that was intended to convey great surprise. "Of course it's all right. Why shouldn't it be? Freddy'll be around himself to thank you, as soon as he gets off duty."

She looked at me with an odd, mirthless little smile, but said nothing.

"What did you do with the horse?" I asked, by way of making conversation.

"I sent him back to the picket-lines. I doubt if Mr. Flanders will try him out to-day," she answered me wearily.

"Nor any other day," I responded. "He'll send him to a sales-stable and win out a good profit—you see if he don't."

While I was speaking she rose. Then, for the first time, I noticed that she was hatless, that her hair was braided in a long tail, hanging far below her waist, and that she wore an old khaki riding-skirt, long outgrown.

"So you really are tired of being grown up, even for a night, are you, girl?" I asked, with a laugh. "I thought that by this morning you'd have changed your mind, but it seems you haven't."

"It was just dressing up in play when I put those clothes on yesterday evening," she answered slowly. "I grew up then, I think. When Fanny was so cruel. Now, *these* clothes are just dressing up. But I wanted to look like a little girl when I rode the horse to show Mr. Flanders. I'm very tired now, Daddy Quentin. My knees feel all shaky. I'll go back to Dad's Dad, please."

I had almost to carry the child to her grandfather's tent. Once there, I put her carefully in the inner compartment and tied down the flap. One of Redfield's horses, ready saddled, stood at the door, but he was not there. I met him hurrying by as I came out.

"Have you seen Philly?" he asked.

"Yes. She's in there now, lying down. Leave her alone," I replied.

"Thank God!" he said, and wilted against the tent-pole as though all his strength had left him. "Do you know," he went on, "I've rarely had such a fright before. Rarely, sir. They told me that she was away somewhere, on that damned man-eating horse of Preston's."

"She was," said I. "She was, and you're not to scold her for it. She wasn't hurt, and she had a reason for what she did. What it is I'm not at liberty to say, and no more is she. But you can take my word for it, Redfield, that you have one more reason to be proud of that girl."

Redfield straightened, and deliberately swung himself on his horse as the bugles blew. Gathering his reins, he looked down at me.

"Drake, I suffered the tortures of the damned when I heard that Philly was mounted on that brute. The tortures of the damned, sir. Therefore I'm most glad to hear what you have just said. For otherwise, old as Philly is, upon my word, sir, I think I should have——"

He blew his nose loudly, and stuffing his handkerchief back into his left gauntlet, set his spurs and galloped away for parade.

FRIENDS IN NEED



By Mary Heaton Vorse

IT wasn't my fault in the least that I heard about it. I was sitting there in the back parlor, large as life, reading at the window, while Osborn, my son, who is a freshman at college, and three of his college friends were singing a college ditty at the piano. It went, if I remember the words rightly:

Father and mother pay all the bills, and we have all the fun,
In the friendly rivalry of college strife, hoorah!
We have to figure an awful lot to find out what we've done
With the money that we spent in college life, hoorah!

This song has a merry air to it, and I was quite enjoying the scene, when it was interrupted by the sudden arrival of a young fellow I have come to know by the name of Shorty Dodson. He had seen the boys through the long window, and had come in through the open door without the formality of a ring, and dropped himself into a chair.

Shorty Dodson is a round-faced youth of the low-comedian type. In Osborn's set he has a reputation for wit. Always before I have seen him roll into the house, jolly and round-faced; to-day he dragged himself in with a look about him that I can only describe as wilted. He dropped himself into a chair, and so extremely was his look of utter defeat that the boys stopped singing to inquire:

"What's eatin' you, Shorty?"

To which he replied: "I gotta have ten dollars."

They all stared at him. Osborn commanded:

"Oh, quit your joshin', Shorty! He's just joshin' us, fellows. He's givin' us a jolly!"

They all laughed uproariously.

"You got your rise!" they crowed.

"Rise!" gloomed the round-faced youth. "Rise nothin'! I'm givin' it to you straight. I tell you, I gotta have ten dollars—I gotta get it before to-morrow."

To this a tall, red-haired boy, known as Sandy, exclaimed:

"He's dippy! Go get him the ice-water, Os. The heat's affected him!"

Osborn joined in with: "Yes, you're loony! You know, don't you, as well as I, that the whole bunch of us is bust—clean bust?"

Shorty Dodson only replied to this in his dull monotone: "I gotta have ten dollars before to-morrow!"

"Why don't you ask for a million at once?" said Sandy. "It would be just as easy to raise!"

At this Fred Wilson, Osborn's especial chum, said:

"Van's got some, hasn't he? Didn't old Van get something out've his governor just now?"

They all breathed sighs of relief.

"Sure!" they said. "Van's got something! We can stick old Van."

It seemed to them a perfect matter of course that if Shorty Dodson absolutely had to have ten dollars, ten dollars had somehow to be got.

At the name of Van, Shorty emitted a groan. He waved his hands at them.

"Don't talk to me about Van! I can't touch Van for this—leave him out've it! Wait till you hear!"

Shorty swallowed once or twice. He seemed to find it difficult to make his confession. Finally he brought it out.

"I asked a girl to come to Greytown to the game to-morrow," he said.

"*You* asked a *girl*," echoed Fred, "to go to Greytown—without a cent in your pocket and not a cent in the crowd—you asked a *girl* to go! That's what it is to have a sense of humor! You're too darn funny, Shorty!"

Shorty lifted a deprecatory hand.

"Listen here," he said, "I didn't think she'd go—how'd I know she'd go? It's Mabel Griffin—Van's girl. I was calling there this afternoon—say, she's a winner, she's all right!—and we were getting thick as thieves, and me having a good time and talking what a bully fellow Van was, and all; and it just slipped outa me—I thought of course she was going to the game with Van. I just wanted to be polite—just to say I'd *like* to take her, if I could. So I just said—just like saying 'Good afternoon': 'Won't you come to the game to-morrow, Miss Griffin?' Gee! When she said 'Yes,' I thought I'd faint on the spot! I couldn't see straight! It was a solar-plexus one for poor Shorty! Me with twenty-seven cents, and letters about economy from the family every morning, and the whole gang bust—not a spondunk in sight—and there sat that peach saying she'd go to the ball-game with me!"

He buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, how," he took his plaint up again, "*how* could I tell that that queenly girl would think of going to a ball-game with me! I thought she just thought I was a nice little round joke! Why, I'd as soon expect the Queen of Spain to go to a ball-game as her. Just to be polite—just to be polite, I asked her, having nothing else to say—just to fill in the time I asked her to go to the ball-game with me! And she—she said 'Yes!' " he lamented.

They all stood around the stricken youth, shaking their heads, slapping him consolingly on the shoulder. It was a terribly grave situation. Again he took it up:

"And the worst of it is, think of old Van! He'll think I'm buttin' in—just think how mad he'll be! And I can't go to him, can I, and say: 'I've just asked your girl to the ball-game, just for a josh'—no man'd like that, would he? I just wanted her to feel she was having an awfully good time around here. I've got sisters of my own—I know how girls like to have three or four invitations to things, even if they do come from little runts like me. There I was, thinking she was going off to the ball-game with the king-pin—course he'd have asked her if she'd waited a minute! But there, that's like a girl—snap up the first bid you get to anything! They're all alike, big tall queens and little freckle-faced runts!"

"What ails you," said Fred distinctly, "is that you talk too much! You shoot off your face like it was a shooting-gallery! The question is now, not what made you do it, but what've *we* got to do about it. We've got to raise the price, of course, but how? That's what we've got to find out."

"First place, we've gotta pool all we have," Osborn suggested.

They all turned their pockets inside out, and between the five of them they netted two dollars and thirty-seven cents.

"We'd better find out, too," said Sandy, "what's the very least he can get off with, takin' her up to Greytown."

I may explain here that the college which my son attends is in a venerable college town but a few miles by trolley from us. The home team goes to Greytown, some little distance, to meet a rival college, a sort of meeting-place between the two.

Osborn got out a pocket-pad and a pencil.

"Two dollars and fifty-seven cents to Greytown and back," he began.

"Oh, no, Os!" groaned the unfortunate Shorty. " 'Tisn't as much as that!"

"Two dollars and fifty-seven cents

there and back," Osborn repeated implacably. "That makes five dollars and fourteen cents. One dollar entrance on the grand stand, each—that's seven dollars and fourteen cents."

There came a groan from the host.

"Then, trolley fares from the station and back, and eats—there've got to be eats, too, you know. If you don't have to do anything extra, you may get off for nine dollars and twenty-five cents—not a cent less. You can't do it on less—you've got to have ten. And *then*, if anything comes up, like ice-cream or anything, you've gotta turn a frozen face!"

Silence fell again. Shorty Dodson sat looking into space with haunted, unseeing eyes. His four friends stood pityingly around him. It was no time for reproaches. The situation was too tragic for that. That girl had *got* to be taken to that ball-game, of that there was no doubt.

Finally Shorty spoke.

"Oh, if I was only home—I gotta aunt I can always touch for five! I'm always square with her, too," he went on virtuously. "I pay her back—or offer to—every time!" A sudden ray of hope illuminated his face. "You gotta aunt, too, haven't you, Os?"

"My aunt ain't any good for this," Osborn replied gloomily.

And indeed, it would not have occurred to my eldest son to approach my sister Maria.

"Besides," Osborn went on, "I can't get a cent outa any one at home."

He said it without bitterness, the mere statement of a dismal fact, that the others understood only too well. Osborn has indeed, of late, been rather extravagant, as boys will in college, and his father has felt it time to call a halt, and has forbade any softening of the heart on my part in the advancing of funds to Osborn.

"If every one of us could raise two dollars," Fred Wilson decided, "it'd be all right."

Shorty lifted his pain-racked face.

"Who from? Who from are we going to raise two dollars?" was what he wanted to know. "Whenever we want to raise the wind, we raise it off'n each other, don't we? Well, look at us now! And if we go outside, we'll all go to the same people, won't we? And everybody but Van as bust as we! Oh, what's Van going to say?"

He rose to his feet.

"Darn women!" he said. "That's what I get for fussin'!"

Here a short, taciturn youth, named Graham, spoke for the first time.

"I got a watch I can hock for two."

"That ain't so bad!" cried Sandy, slapping Shorty on the back. "That makes four dollars and thirty seven cents already yet!"

"It's five o'clock," Osborn reminded them. "We'd better hike. You gotta have that money by ten to-morrow morning. If George's going to soak that watch, he'll just have time to get over."

The party separated. They had come over with the intention of staying to supper, and I knew would return. I sat there. The humor of the situation made me laugh—I suppose hard-heartedly. 'Tisn't often that one gets the inside workings of the social life in which one's son is engaged. The solidarity of the boys was what impressed me, also. It didn't occur to one of them to think that it might not be his business to aid in providing funds with which to take a girl, whom he didn't want to take, to a distant ball-game. Neither had a ray of the humor of the situation penetrated. All was darkest gloom. They were so broke, all of them, poor lads, that two dollars loomed a splendid fortune—and yet those two dollars were going to be raised somehow, somewhere.

Osborn began proceedings at home with his usual directness. He seized his brother Jimmie in the hall. Jimmie, at thirteen, is accustomed to obey Osborn with a literalness and promptitude that his father and I have never yet had shown us. Osborn now said to Jimmie:

"Go get your bank."

Jimmie has a square iron bank in which he puts his pocket-money. It is a bank that can be opened with a certain key when full and put together

again. You can also shake out a five or ten-cent piece when necessary. He now brought it down, saying apologetically:

"I ain't got much, Os."

"Gimme what you got," Osborn demanded without explanation. "I gotta have some mon."

Jimmie took this statement with the same simple acquiescence that Dodson's friends had taken the statement of his needing ten dollars. Osborn, meanwhile, dexterously opened the bank. There were seventy-seven cents in it.

"Would that help you any?" asked Jimmie anxiously.

"Sure," said Osborn. "Every little helps."

"How much do you want?" Jimmie asked next. "I think I know where I can get some."

"I want as much as you can get," said Osborn.

"Five dollars?" asked Jimmie.

Osborn's eyes opened wide.

"How can you get five dollars?" he demanded.

"I dunno if I can," Jimmie answered, "but I'm goin' to try."

"How are you going to get it?" his chief demanded.

"Don't ask me, Os," replied Jimmie, "if you want to have it."

"Oh, all right," Osborn replied. This was a great concession for him.

Next he wandered in to me and in a take-it-or-leave-it tone, which left out of possibility the chance that he realized I had heard all of the proceeding: "You got fifty cents in your purse, mother?" he asked.

His tone was so matter of fact, so like his father, that even forewarned as I was, I put my hand in my pocket and, completely bamboozled, delivered fifty cents to my son. It was a masterly triumph of tact.

Osborn now wandered up and down the piazza. His father came home. Him Osborn greeted with a polite: "Good evening, sir." Henry, you see, has been touched to his limit.

Now, see in what a different way a mother and a younger brother are approached, from a sister, in delicate financial transactions. Osborn was lying in wait for his sister Edith. Edith is sixteen, and has lately, since her brother has been in college, got to occupy a prominent place in his life, Osborn's friends considering her "all to the good."

He joined Edith and engaged her in talk about his friends who were coming that night. I couldn't hear what they said, but I could see Osborn's pleasant manner through the window. Flattery was what he was using; laying it on with a trowel, was my son, I made no doubt. I could see Osborn getting more and more polite, and Edith expanding into the grown-up ways of a young lady before his eyes.

How successful he was I could judge by hearing Edith exclaim, as she came in the door:

"Oh, haven't you got any change, Osborn? Just wait till I run up-stairs and see what's in my purse."

Here Osborn, that sink of duplicity, murmured:

"Oh, don't bother, Ede!"

"Oh, do let me!" she persisted. The offer, you see, had come from her. The favor of acceptance was going to be on Osborn's side.

Blithely the poor, deluded girl ran for her pocketbook. The contents proved unsatisfactory. Fifty-nine cents was all that could be gleaned. Of this, with a royal air, Osborn took half a dollar. He couldn't afford to lose his prestige with his sister by scraping up the coppers.

Thus, you see, Osborn had mulcted his family for one dollar and seventy-seven cents, but twenty-three cents more were needed to make up his share.

Before supper Jimmie came to Osborn and said mysteriously:

"I'll have'm for you to-morrow."

Osborn glanced warningly toward me. I also wondered what means my younger son had employed to get such a princely fortune as five dollars.

The five boys straggled in just before tea. Supper at first was a stiff meal. Henry was away on business, and the boys talked politely back and forth. They had had no chance to

compare notes to any extent. Had they, or had they not, got the required sum was what hung heavy in the air. It hung so heavy that it even impaired poor Shorty Dodson's robust appetite for broiled chicken. Edith chattered away in vain like a young lady. The consuming question must be answered.

Finally Osborn said:

"Oh, hang it, fellows, let's let 'em in about it! Let's tell 'em!" It was more than human nature could stand to eat through a meal in this suspense.

"You see, Mrs. Preston," Fred Wilson explained, "Shorty has to have ten dollars. He asked a girl to the ball-game, and we're all broke, and we've been trying to raise it. So now let's all tell what we did."

Here Maria echoed:

"Ten dollars—to take a young lady to the ball-game! Dear, dear! No wonder that you young gentlemen are all, as you call it, 'broke.'"

They laughed in a gratified way. For some reason, Maria's speech pleased them. I presume they thought themselves devils of fellows.

Osborn began:

"I got one dollar and seventy-seven cents. Now, if Aunt Maria'll give me twenty-three cents I'll have my two dollars."

"Certainly," said Maria graciously.

She opened her purse. It was the chance of a lifetime for her to do the handsome and spectacular. A five-dollar bill was nestling in the depths of that pocketbook. I saw it and Osborn saw it. For a fraction of a second she wavered maddeningly in the balance, her desire to shine and her prudent spirit warring with each other. In the end, prudence won. Maria counted out exactly twenty-three cents upon the table.

From the beginning of the recital, Edith had cast a look of deep suspicion upon her brother. She had been neatly flattered out of her fifty cents, and she knew it, and a certain look of triumph danced in her eyes as Aunt Maria showed herself proof against the blandishments of man.

Fred now told his tale, not without satisfaction.

"I got my two," he said, "from Sid Foster. I just went up to him—he was boning hard, like always—and I just said: 'Say, old man, is it convenient to pay me back that two dollars?' He sort of stared at me, blank. I said, just as confident as anything: 'The two I lent you at the ball-game—the first ball-game, you know.' And he shoved it right out! He said: 'Why, I beg your pardon, Wilson, I'd forgotten entirely about it. Awfully sorry! Glad I happened to have it just now.'"

"He's an awful white fellow," said Osborn. "He's the most absent-minded chap in the world."

"We'll pay him back the first of all," said Shorty. "Poor old Foster!"

That was the first I had heard of paying back. Of course, they intended to do that. Jimmie and Edith, I knew, for instance, were as sure of their fifty cents and seventy-seven cents as if they had lent it to the Bank of England; but the subject of paying back wasn't one to be discussed now.

"How much've you got, Sandy?" Osborn asked next.

"One dollar and seventy-five cents was all I could rake up," he said. "I couldn't think of anybody to touch, and I just sold some things—books and things. I won't need 'em much more this year, anyway—you fellows'll have to lend me yours."

"Sure!" they chorused.

"You see, Shorty," they triumphed, "we're coming out fine! Don't look so blue, Shorty."

"Oh, 'tisn't that!" groaned Shorty. "It's the fifty cents that I got out've Van that's eatin' me! I didn't know what to do—I sorta felt all flabbergasted, the way I have all day. I wasn't good for anything; and all I could think of was when Petey came along, and I said: 'Say, old man, just lend me some car fare to get over to Elmhurst—I'm going to take supper at Osborn's,' and he said: 'Sorry, old man, I'm bust.' And just then Van came along and said: 'Want some money, Shorty? I got some,' just as fine as a fiddle! He'd

have given me more, but I'd only take fifty cents—it was the smallest he had. I don't know what's the matter with him; they can't have had a scrap; she can't have turned him down. He just came from over there."

"P'r'aps she's turned *you* down," they suggested.

"P'r'aps she has," he returned gloomily, in the tone of one who says: "No such luck!"

"You see," Osborn condescended to explain, "when Shorty asked her he thought that Van had already, and that she'd turn him down."

"Oh!" came indignantly from Edith.

"I just wanted to be agreeable," lamented the guilty host.

"Well, you see, now we'll be all right," said Osborn—he had been keeping tally—"with yours." He nodded to Graham. "We've got ten dollars and sixty-two cents."

Graham, I noticed, had been sunk in gloom throughout the meal. Here he threw a bomb among his joyous mates.

"I lost it!" he said.

"You—lost—your two dollars?" faltered Osborn. It wouldn't be polite, I gathered, to mention before ladies the fate that was to have befallen Graham's watch.

"On the way over," he groaned. "I went to put my hand in my pocket for it—it was gone. I looked everywhere—it was just gone."

"Well, that leaves us one dollar and fifty cents shy," said Osborn.

Jimmie now began a series of signals and grimaces to Osborn. All the boys but Shorty began to see the humor of the thing. Supper finished gaily. As they passed out of the dining-room, Osborn confided to them in undertones something which I took to be the glad tidings that his kid brother was going to save the situation.

But, alas for Jimmie's plans! Supper was barely over when our old cook, Seraphy, stamped into the sitting-room where I was. The young people had burst into song in the front parlor.

"Ye can tell Jimmie and Osborn, ma'am," began my faithful cook, "that it's to no savin's-bank I'm goin' to-morrow mornin', so that them youngsters can go strapagin' round to ball-games wid girls who never did a tap o' work in their lives—no, ma'am! It ain't for that that I'm goin' to take my hard-earned savin's—an' me old mother gettin' older an' older every year! Out've no savin's-bank!"

"Why, what's this, Seraphy?" I asked.

"It's Jimmie comes to me. Says he: 'Whissht! Seraphy, come to th' back kitchen; I want to talk to you.' So nothin' doubtin', I goes to th' back kitchen—it's th' old, soft-hearted fool I am, Mis' Preston, an' at my time o' life, I ought to know wan o' Jimmie's divil-tries when I see 'em. 'Seraphy,' says he to me, 'do you want to save Osborn from black disgrace?' says he. 'What's that you're talkin', Jimmie?' says I. 'Whissht!' says Jimmie. 'It's five dollars Osborn's got to have before ten in th' mornin'. He dassn't go to his father nor mother.'

"An' then, ma'am, back me mind goes to Osborn spillin' over th' batter of me cakes, that cunnin'like, when he wasn't more'n a year an' a half old, an' when he eat th' cheese out've th' mouse-traps that cunnin'. An' thinks I, byes'll be byes, so: 'Don't worry no more,' says I to Jimmie. The two eyes of him was startin' out've his head. You'd 'a' thought, ma'am, to see Jimmie, that 'lectrocuted was what Osborn was goin' to be, if he didn't get th' five dollars. 'It's the bully old brick ye are!' says Jimmie. 'In th' mornin',' says I, 'I'll go up an' get it from the bank.' Glory be, I'd been up puttin' me last wages in th' bank but three days gone, or I'd 'a' down in me stockin' an' give him the five that minute!

"So when th' second girl come back to me to-night—an' I never see that many waffles eat before in my life, though it's many th' waffle I've seen go; but in all my days, Mis' Preston, I never cooked waffles so fast an' hard as 'twas this evenin'—an' when Lizzie comes back an' she says that that pack o' young rapscallions was all a-bustin' themselves gettin' money to take a young lady to a show, an' Osborn even

got twenty-three cents from Miss Maria, 'twas then I smells a rat, an' says I: 'I'll go in an' tell Mis' Preston the whole thing—when they leave off eatin' the waffles, if so be that ever happens!'"

"Well!" said Maria. "Did you ever hear the limits that boys'll go! And I was at the point of lending those rascals a few of my poor pennies."

And indeed, my sister's little income is of the meagerest, and it is no wonder if she saves her pennies hard.

"Moreover," said Maria, "I've seen it in your face, Editha, that you're going to make up that deficiency—you're just that soft-hearted! But I'll tell you that it's far from pleased your husband'll be. Though I don't know that that will make any difference to you, Editha, in the face of indulging one of your children."

Indeed, Maria had gaged my feelings to a nicety. I had certainly meant to supply the needful one dollar and fifty cents; but now, at Seraphy's tale, my heart shut with a snap. Very likely it wasn't a logical reason to deny Shorty Dodson the money. After all, he'd had nothing to do with Jimmie's raid on Seraphy, though, to do Jimmie justice, he didn't know what Osborn wanted the money for. Very likely his romantic mind imagined Osborn was in some deep and direful scrape. But now I made up my mind that they should fight their battle themselves. So I steeled myself for the attack I knew Osborn would make on me.

The boys had all gone to bed in that room known as the "boys' room." This is a large room on the third floor; it was once an enormous room, and has been built off from the rest of the attic. In it Osborn, and as many of his friends as he chooses to bring home with him, sleep. It has been some time since I've known just how many would appear at the breakfast-table.

After he had disposed of his friends, Osborn came to make the final attack on me. I will not go into the details of this painful interview. Among other reasons, Osborn told me gloomily what the fellows would think of a mother like that. He intimated that there was not a mother in Christendom who would fail to be touched by the anguish of Shorty Dodson. But there are moments when I have a backbone of my own, as well as any one else, and I remained firm.

"There won't be anything for him to do," said Osborn, "but to have a sprained ankle and stay in bed; he'll have to stay in bed till she leaves town; he'll have to stay in bed right in this house!"

But even this threat only hardened my adamantine heart.

"Let him do it!" I cried. "Let him stay in bed as long as he wants. It'll teach him not to ask people to go to things that he can't afford to take them to!"

I reflected that I could ill afford two dollars to spend on alien youths; for after all, ours is a family of most modest means, with many demands upon it, and the margin for amusement is not a large one. And why, indeed, I argued to myself, should I spend two dollars on a round-faced youth that I would think too large a price to pay for any theater-ticket? But at heart, above these perfectly reasonable arguments, I felt as though I were the meanest woman ever created—so mean, indeed, that I weakened to the extent of fifty cents.

"We'll be able somehow," Osborn said, with his usual optimism, "to raise that other dollar."

I learned later that he borrowed another quarter of his Aunt Maria, using similar tactics. After all, Osborn wasn't to blame. It was purely altruistic on his part.

The morning dawned, with seventy-five cents yet to find. I heard them discussing in corners if he could go on his nine dollars and twenty-five cents, which left him without one cent over and above expenses. Every one but Shorty felt he could.

"You'll sure see some one at the game you can stick for a quarter if you must have it."

"But suppose she orders something extra on me at lunch—what then?" Shorty demanded.

They had got past any point of delicacy now, and discussed the matter openly before all of us.

"Well," Osborn began crisply, "you got to make up your mind, Shorty, *now*, whether I go round with a note from you saying you sprained your ankle falling down-stairs, or whether you go, that's all! And if you ask me, I say it's a mean trick to play on a girl to let her wait till the last minute."

"I don't know *what* to do!" wailed Shorty. "I don't know what to do! I can't throw her down—and I can't, I *can't* go on nine dollars and twenty-five cents!"

Osborn looked at me. "Save the honor of this family!" was what the look meant. Slowly my hand traveled to my purse. But here came a ring at the door-bell. It was Miss Griffin's cousin, a boy of about Jimmie's age. He came bearing a note from Miss Griffin to Shorty Dodson.

That young gentleman tore the note open, and as he read, a look of perfect peace spread over his face. He handed it to Osborn, who handed it on to the rest of the crowd.

"You'll be very sorry," said Shorty, "to lose your cousin so suddenly."

"Suddenly nothin'!" replied the youth. "She's been meanin' to go home this mornin' for a week!"

"W-w-hy!" gasped Shorty, surprised into speech. "She said she'd go with me to the ball-game!"

"You ain't th' on'y one she said *that* to!" replied the boy sourly. "She sent a speshal d'liv'ry last night to Van, an' another one I don't know who to. Mabel's like that. She's so pleasant—she hates not to do anythin' anybody asks her to, so she jus' accepted everybody, an' wrote 'em afterward she had to leave suddin'. *You* know how girls are!" He embraced the boys of the party with a comprehensive eye, as if they, too, had suffered as he had at the hands of women.

But here occurred a surprising thing. With a rapid but polite bow to me, Shorty Dodson mobilized. Crying, "So-long, fellows!" he rushed in the direction of the trolley-car which leads to the station.

The boys all stood amazed for a moment, looking at each other. Then Fred Wilson spoke.

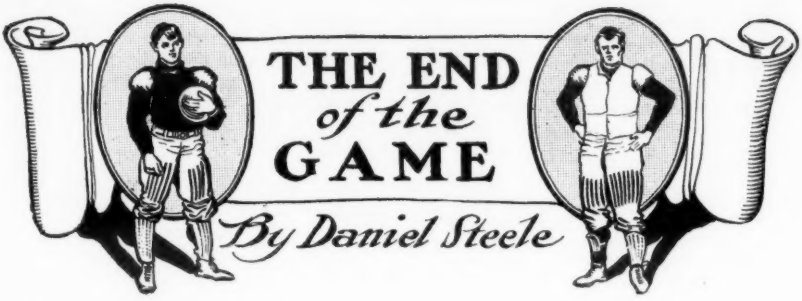
"The lobster! He's got the cash, and he's going to the ball-game by himself!"



ONLY ONE LIFE TO LIVE

ONE little paltry life—why, it is naught;
It takes us all of *one* to learn to live.
We laugh and play and climb—through half of it—
The hill, reaching the top all out of breath;
Too tired to stand a moment on its crest,
Too late to sit a while with those we love,
Too dark to choose a pathway, smooth and firm,
Too undecided which will please us most,
Too ill at last to do or think or say,
Too near the end to make it matter which.
We need, you see, a whole life, on the brow;
That satisfied, we could pass down to rest.

JEAN WATTS.



MARY ALLEN, pretty as any picture, with a huge bunch of violets pinned on the front of her dress, sat in the corner of the front seat of the crowded, crawling trolley, riding out to the football-game. An endless line of cars filled the elm-shaded street, and crowds of other Mary Allens with their brothers, fathers, families, and friends, all a gay family gathering multiplied into the thousands, packed the cars, or walked beside them on the sidewalks. Occasionally a motor-car raced between. On the whole, the trolley made better time than the people on foot, though at the start it did almost seem better to get off and walk.

Mary discussed this point with her brother who stood beside her on the step. His big head was pitched forward between his heavy shoulders in an awkward stoop as he bent to listen to her, while directly in front of her face the whirling brake-handle, as the grip-man constantly twisted and untwisted it, threatened to remove the tip of her nose.

Mary and her brother were so fortunate as to have an aunt whose big old-fashioned house was situated on the corner of two quiet streets in the little college town. There they had partaken of an early and sumptuous luncheon, quite different from the cold, poorly cooked sort of affair which a great many were forced to accept from the best hotel in the town, whose inadequate service was a proverbial joke. It was now quite early, and, as there was plenty of time before the game began, they decided to remain on the car.

Then, having settled this point, a silence not unusual between brother and sister ensued, and each fell to musing. To the brother, a graduate of some years, the street wore an age-long familiar look. The quaint little wooden houses, decorated for the occasion, and the people sitting in their windows and on their porches, watching this annual exodus to the great annual game, were to him like a leaf from a memorabilia-book. The tall towering elms, and the blue sky overhead, and the cold crisp air with its tonic essence of November, it all stirred him to memories of other days.

They passed an old white gabled house built quite close to the sidewalk. Its front entrance, a little box of two or three steps, thrust its dilapidated self right out onto the pavement, but, apologetically, as it seemed, as though it had to be there and was willing to be stepped on, but, by shrinking back, was trying its best not to trip up the passers-by.

Up-stairs, on the second floor of this quaint old house, was Karl's room, in freshman year, before he and Karl had roomed together. How many times the brother remembered being in there, during that first roseate year of college, listening to Karl's mandolin improvisations, or his interesting and not too reliable talk. Poor, adventurous Karl, killed afterward in the Philippines!

And here he was going alone past the old place which knew him not. A curious sense of the shortness of college life and the utter passing away of all save its memories, came over him with the words of an old song, as a dozen places on just this one street leading out to the field called up a hundred memories.

His musing was interrupted by his sister's question.

"Is Jack going to play to-day?"

"No," he replied. "Jack hasn't any chance. They've moved him from half to end lately, but they didn't use him last Saturday, and they won't need him to-day."

A quiet "Oh" was all her answer. It seemed strange to her as she looked back, many years ago it seemed to her, to the time when she was a very little sister, and remembered when her brother was in college, that he should have had his four years on the varsity team and all his triumphs apparently thrown to him by fortune, while other men should try all through college, and find it so impossible to get even the right to wear the initial letter of their college by playing once in a "big game."

Not that she cared overmuch about Jack. Indeed, not that. But he was just one of her friends who happened to be trying for the team. It was his senior year and this was the final big game of the year, and the last chance for him. It seemed too bad. He was the kind of person who deserved things. He was so quiet and so thoughtful about others.

And then there came to her the recollection of a strange remark her mother had made about him once. It was after they had returned home from a game earlier in the season in which Jack had had the good fortune to take part.

"If Jack Dudley ever asks you to marry him, you do it, do you hear?"

"Why, mother?"

"Because he is rich, and his people are nice, and he has a beautiful home."

"But suppose I don't love him?" she had asked in her simple way.

"Never mind, you do it."

This strange and mercenary advice she had wondered at more than once since, not knowing how much seriousness was meant to go with it. Sometimes it was hard to tell just how serious mother was. Well, anyway, it was too bad that Jack wouldn't earn his letter; and he had tried for four years. It certainly seemed queer to her that he was not good enough to play, after the magnificent run he had made in the game against the cadets. And as she sat tucked away in the front seat of the car she almost, for a time, lost enthusiasm for the great joyous conflict that was to come.

And then a motor-car whizzed by, flags flying. She caught sight of a familiar face, and suddenly became all animation. The motor slowed down as its occupants recognized Mary Allen and her brother, and waved to them. There was Richard, to be sure, and his sister and his mother, and John, and Harry, and some of his sister's friends, and—Richard and two others jumped out at the imminent risk of broken legs and necks, and ran, breathless, hats in hand, and shoved the big brother off the step to shake hands with Mary. Of course they must get in the auto, there was lots of room.

And so they did, amid great laughter and excitement and hand-shaking all round. And one of Richard's friends was introduced to the big brother, and seemed quite awed, indeed.

And after the first flurry of settling down, and Richard's perching up on the very top, the amazing and delightful discovery was made that they all had seats together! Mary was in her jolliest mood, and kept up a rapid fire of repartee with Richard, to the great enjoyment of the others, all the rest of the way out to the field. Poor Jack Dudley's existence was entirely forgotten.

Out and around by a country road, just at the edge of the town, leaving the trolleys and the crowd, and skirting a wood, to another cross-road which led to the field, they went, and here a fresh excitement met them. They

had left their machine and had joined the crowd, large in spite of the early hour, trooping toward the entrances to the playing field, which opened like sheep-pens, where the back of the huge wooden framework stand towered overhead, when what should they see but the special car which carried *the* team and substitutes slow down near a doorway in the high wooden fence!

With a little shiver of delight, and an "Oh!" Mary Allen turned around and danced like a child, and as the players began to tumble out of the car, she turned to her brother.

"Quick! Tell me who they are. Is that Morton, and Southwaite? Oh, it is, it is!" And then she added: "If we could *only* see them close to!"

The others laughed. But it so happened, in the hurrying crowd making its way to the ticket entrances, that that most desirable consummation actually occurred; and Mary was even jostled against some of the great towering creatures clad in their curious mud-stained garments with their serious and rather downcast faces, and the sense of power they seemed to carry with them as they moved hurriedly toward the gate in the fence, unconscious of the attention they were attracting from this accidental momentary close quarters with a small eddy of the great flood of humanity which was pouring out to see them do battle.

Mary turned with a giggle of delight to say something to Richard, and found herself suddenly confronted with Jack Dudley.

He didn't tower into the sky-line like some of the others, but he did look big and strong and fine. A sweater was tied loosely around his neck, and as he held out his right hand, making his way through the crowd, she saw it was bandaged with fresh white tape.

"Why, Mary," he cried, and held out his bandaged hand to shake her daintily gloved one.

"Hello, Jack," she said, and after a pause: "Aren't you going to play today?"

"Oh, me? No," Jack replied, turning to face her as he backed off. "Tad Alton's knee is in bully shape to go in if Steve gets hurt."

Alton was the substitute end, rated ahead of Jack, and Jack made the statement reassuringly and as a matter for general congratulation that there should be a better man than himself ready to play. And then he was gone quickly, and she called after him: "Oh, I hope you do," and turned to look for her friends whom she seemed to have missed.

"Here," Richard was calling back to her, "here we all are." And then as she regained her place with them: "We thought perhaps you were going with the team."

They all laughed, and Mary said with an earnest emphasis behind her gaiety: "I wish to goodness I *could* play today."

And so the last glimpse Jack had of her, as she vanished in the crowd along the dusty road, Richard was piloting her by the elbow, and she was looking up at him and laughing.

The great arena was about half filled when they entered it and found their seats opposite the fifty-yard line and about ten rows back. They exclaimed at their good fortune in getting such seats. It was early and rather quiet. The sun shone down out of a clear sky, making a cold brisk day seem rather too warm for coats.

While Mary and Richard's sister formed a center of intermittent talk, Mary's brother looked out over the old field, and his mind traveled back again to the other days. Away over in the far corner, marked now by freshly laid lime, was the part of the goal-line where years before the last team he had played on had crossed for their winning touchdown in his last game. The field, its grass worn away in places by a season's work of cleated shoes, looked the same as ever. The whole place was very much the same to-day except that the bleachers had crept skyward many more rows and formed a great wooden funnel, which made the playing field resemble a brown and green valley in the heart of gray mountains.

Gradually the empty rows filled up,

and almost before he was aware the bare patches had disappeared, and the great joyous crowd, outlined like a mountain range against the sky, was hurling cheer after cheer back and forth. Then each side rose en masse and cheered for their opponents; having performed which sportsmanlike courtesy, they proceeded to burst into unrestrained joy over the fact that they had thought of it. Then one after the other the teams came on the field, and the cheering that had gone before was eclipsed in the torrent of welcome which poured down upon their devoted heads.

All at once the thrill of expectation gripped Mary's brother, although the scene was an old one to him. It was all new once more, all previous games were forgotten. It was the same as though it had never happened before. A year of pent-up enthusiasm, stored away like old wine, kept for this one afternoon, was flowing forth sparkling and genuine. It was real.

He looked down at those young fellows as they tossed the ball around, and knew what was passing in their minds, and like many a hundred and thousand of graduates, old and young, looking down that day, his gaze was a benediction. Then the coin was tossed, the side chosen, and the first whistle blew. With painful scrutiny and breathless apprehension he watched the first scrimmage on the twenty-five-yard line.

There are two ways of watching a football-game. In fact, the onlookers might be grouped into three classes. Under the first head would come those who watch from the side-lines, principally players and coaches, and ex-players; who read every move with trained understanding; and who on occasions when the play comes over to the side, get a very near view of the game; who hold fragmentary converse among themselves; but for the most part sit silent and just watch, apparently ignoring the cheering, and only exhibiting signs of joy on the occasion of a touch-down or other marked achievement.

Thus, Jack Dudley, as he reclined on his elbow on a blanket, in the midst of a group of his fellows, kept his eyes a great part of the time glued to the playing of the ends and half-backs, and except as corollary thereto, saw very little of what the other men were doing, and was perfectly oblivious of the existence of the crowd in the stands.

Secondly, there is the game as seen from the bleachers. Up here there are the excitement and unexpectedness of the conflict, the joining in with set cheers and songs in time to the waving megaphones of the leaders below, which from our side of the field seem rather thin, but which meet together and reach the enemy across the field, in volume like to the thunder with which they in turn assail us. And then, interrupting these cheers and songs with unpremeditated shouts whenever our side makes a gain, and springing to the feet and standing on the seats and craning our necks to see what happens when a runner gets loose around the end, or a catcher scampers up the field dodging opponents as he runs in the ball. And the awful silence and fear when something goes wrong.

And so, Mary Allen and Richard, and John and Harry, and the rest, kept themselves quite on the qui vive. And Mary, having been brought up on football, and understanding quite as much as a girl can, explained a great deal to Richard's sister and mother.

The third way is for one who belongs either in the game or on the side-lines, to be watching it from a seat in the stand. Mary's brother felt curiously out of place. He joined half-heartedly in the cheering, and occasionally he explained to the others why an official interfered to change the position of the ball on the field, or why he called back Jones, after he had made a long run.

Once he said to Richard and John prophetically in advance: "Now watch this, watch Morton get under that play." Then, after the play was made: "There, wasn't that a pretty defense?"

Finally Mary said to him: "Go ahead down on the side-lines. I'm all right up here."

And so he went, taking a circular piece of pasteboard out of his inner

pocket, and weaving the string into his coat-lapel, springing down the narrow aisle three steps at a time; mounted a platform whereon stood a cheer-leader, vaulted over the high wire-top fence into the field, shook hands four or five times, and wedged himself into a seat on the narrow bench between one of his team-mates of former years on one side, and a well-known old graduate on the other.

Meanwhile the great game was being played. Finally came the first touch-down; then the second; and the first half was over. The teams trotted off the field, and during the intermission the brother ran up to see Mary and her friends, and was greeted with acclaim.

"Isn't it splendid we're winning? Wasn't that last touch-down simply great? Did you see Jones when he passed that man, and held his hand out this way?" And so on.

"Colt is playing a good game, isn't he?" asked Richard.

"Best I ever saw in center," replied the brother. "He's passing the ball like a machine."

Finally Mary said: "I don't see why they can't put Jack in now."

Her brother looked at Richard and laughed.

"They're going to put Tad Alton in at end the next half. Jack won't stand any show unless Tad's knee gives out, and the trainer says his knee's all right. Even if he does get hurt, there's that other end they want to try out because they may need him next year when we lose all our ends."

Mary said nothing, but looked quite solemn for almost a minute.

During the second half Mary Allen watched less enthusiastically. The game was practically won. Our team's superiority had been demonstrated early in the first half. Down below the bleachers and just over the top of the enclosing fence, and beyond the line of heads of men sitting on the side-line bench, she could see the squad of players on the side-lines crouching or lying down swathed in blankets.

Two or three of them had already gone into the game and taken the places of other players who were taken out. In front of them, and separated by intervals, were five men chosen from coaches and ex-players, who watched carefully from the very edge of the playing field every play, sometimes standing and sometimes crouching or kneeling. Among them was the head coach, last year's captain, who walked up and down, keeping most of the time directly opposite the scrimmages, erect, his pale, finely chiseled face high in the air, wearing an abstracted and expressionless look, as though any real interest in the game were farthest from his thoughts.

And the minutes sped on, and the great team out on the field swept its opponents back with masterly ease. Another touch-down seemed imminent. It was coming. It was over. Some one had been pushed over the line, and the score-board showed eighteen points.

The work of the head coach, criticized severely during the season on different occasions when things had appeared to go wrong, at last was justified. His wonderfully created offensive machine, and the men who were in it, combining it into a thing of life and quick intelligences, was playing havoc with the second-best team in the country. And yet, as he walked slowly abreast of the play, he looked a little tired and worn. After all, it wasn't his triumph. It belonged to the dust-stained, bleeding, injured men who toiled and fought with their captain out there on the field. His had been the triumph of a year ago, and he was satisfied that it should be so.

And still the minutes flew by and the game went on. The enthusiasm on Mary Allen's side of the field lost its quality of sudden spontaneity and became a state of cheerful content. For her brother's college was accustomed to winning, and there were two kinds of victories, an ordinary one and one achieved in the face of great odds. To-day's victory was of the ordinary kind. It meant that we had an unusually strong team, and that the score

would probably be over twenty points. That was all there was to it.

And so, while the cheer-leaders, perched along the fence down below, implored every one to "get into it," and while every one more or less obeyed, still the volume of set cheering diminished, and things were generally dying down. Eighteen points was a safe lead, and there was not much time left to play.

Mary Allen was conversing in fragments with Richard and the others, all standing up together, over the question: "What shall we do after the game?" and the rest of the time she was silent. Down below her, just over the fence which enclosed the field, and between it and the side-line which marked the edge of the playing field, sat the substitutes and players who were not in the game, motionless and quiet, and among them she could pick out the head and shoulders of Jack Dudley, where he had been sitting through the long afternoon.

A lump came in her throat as she suddenly realized that Jack wouldn't have his chance. In spite of what her brother had told her, she now knew that she had hoped for it for him.

And yet she knew how Jack would take it. She could picture him meeting her bubbling over with delight over the victory, and actually with no thought of himself. There would be no disappointment that he would be trying to hide, because the spirit of his college somehow seemed to cover up and obliterate the petty glory of the individual in the general glory of the great, centuries-old Name for which they all fought.

And thinking on these things she forgot for a moment her surroundings, and let an especially brilliant remark of Richard's fall unheeded on her ear. Well, the game was practically over, and, like a dutiful sister, she would rejoice at the victory.

Down on the side-lines her brother formed one of a group of several coaches and ex-players who were talking together. The head coach had for the minute relaxed his attention from the game, and had joined the group. He had his watch in his hand. There was about five minutes left to play. Some one suggested putting in a certain player.

Mary's brother said nothing, but two other men, both of whom had played on the end of the line at widely separated periods of football history, spoke with a certain authority.

Outside the group stood a short, undersized, wiry man, hands in his pockets, his weight resting on one foot in a rather angular position, as though instead of bones and muscles he was constructed of roughly joined steel bars. He was silent, and looked at and spoke to no one. His large face had a lion-like cast; and his dark eyes seemed to burn holes in anything their gaze rested upon; and his reputation, albeit he had been out of the college many years, was that of the greatest end that ever played football.

The head coach turned and spoke to him. "Put him in," he growled gruffly and walked off. Nothing more was said. The head coach turned on his heel facing the group of substitutes and called a name.

Suddenly, Mary Allen, up in the bleachers, gave a little scream, grabbed Richard most informally by the shoulder, and pointed. A figure on the side-lines was struggling frantically and grotesquely to get out of a sweater. The sweater came off, and the figure ran in a bee-line for the center of the field where the two teams were lining up after a down.

It was Jack. He was going in at right end. Tad Alton walked slowly off the field with the tired and yet comfortable look of a successful hero. He was received by a long cheer ending with his name. Then a cheer was given for Dudley, and Mary Allen joined in, and they all did.

And so when the brother left the side-lines and made his way up to where they were all sitting, he found about the happiest sister he had ever seen, and the jolliest group around her.

The game suddenly took on a new interest. We punted, the ball sailed high in the air, traveling seventy yards.

"Go it, Jack! Go it, Jack!" cried Mary under her breath, as Jack, fresh as a daisy, danced his way through two men who tried to block him, and sprinted down the field, beating out his partner at left end by at least two yards. Then, as the ball dropped into the catcher's arms, Jack and the other end wound themselves around him and fairly nailed him in his tracks. It was a pretty play.

There wasn't very much of the game left, but that didn't make any difference now. Jack's team caught a return punt, and began another march for the goal-line, but time was called long before it could be reached.

The great game was over, and the teams were swamped and obliterated by the rush of spectators onto the field. They reached their respective dressing-rooms as scattered individual players, not as teams.

The captain of Jack's team was borne aloft through the gateway at the upper corner. Then came the long snake-dance of triumphant undergraduates, winding its twisting and whirling course up and down the field, passing under the goal-posts and tossing its shower of caps over the cross-bars as it went, catching its caps again as they came down, and dancing on, singing and shouting.

Part of the great crowd stayed behind a while to look on at the fun. Then came the slow, slow getting out of the field and the happiness of it all, and the special happiness for a certain person because hoping against hope it had come true, and Jack had won the right to wear his college letter.

Late in the evening, Mary Allen and her older brother and her aunt sat in the drawing-room of her aunt's house on the quiet elm-shaded street. Some people had been in to dinner and had gone. They had partaken, among other things, of ice-cream footballs, decorated, at the risk of poisoning each and every person who ate thereof, with the proper color. Later they had all walked up to the campus to see the remains of the big bonfire and the celebration. The streets of the town still rang with an aftermath of noises.

Now it was getting late. The game had been talked over and talked over. There was nothing left to say. Mary's aunt sat on a sofa wearing the happy look of the successful hostess whose efforts are over. The brother, sprawled back in an armchair, was reading rather wearily an extra issue of the college daily which had made its appearance, fresh and wet, ten minutes after the close of the game.

Mary sat behind the black polished top of the grand piano, dressed all in white, playing soft arpeggios and singing. It was bedtime, and yet no one was sleepy. The telephone rang, and Mary ran to answer it.

"Jack wanted to know if you would think it too late for him to come around," she said on returning to the room, "and I told him we should be tickled to death to see him."

"Why, of course," replied her aunt, whose hospitality knew neither bounds nor seasons.

In five minutes a ring at the door and Jack entered, and threw his cap on the hall-table. There was a small cut over his eye, freshly plastered, and his hands were discolored from the removed tape, but otherwise he was quite civilized-looking. He got an enthusiastic reception from the three.

"Jack, why haven't we seen you before? Come right in and sit down. How does it feel to be a hero? Now, you've just got to tell us all about it."

"It's late for me to be butting in like this, Mrs. Wentworth."

"Nonsense, we don't want to go to bed. Just you sit there and talk. Tell us about the banquet."

"Oh, that was great. Yes," turning to the brother, "all the old men made speeches. You ought to have been there."

"Talking about banquets, what do you think of this?" And Mary ran into the dining-room and brought in to show him one of the dinner-favors, a little man dressed up in football togs with a flag stuck into his arm. "We've had a banquet, too." And she proceeded to

tell him about the dinner, and who was there. "And what do you think?" she added. "Richard has invited me to the Prom this winter."

Jack had come around with the specified intention of asking Mary to the Prom. But he paused only an instant before he said in his genuine way: "Isn't that perfectly great!"

"Where are the team now?" asked the brother.

"Oh!" Jack laughed. "Most of the bunch have gone down to Heub's. I hear Tucky was so overcome they had to put him to bed."

"You don't mean one of the men drank too much. Well, I think that's too bad," said the aunt.

"Oh, he's only a freshman. I guess it was the excitement finished him. Shorty and the Ick started out on a young beer-slide. I guessed I'd cut that out, and so I left them and wandered over here."

"Tell us more about the banquet. What did you have to eat?"

"Not much. You see——"

His explanation was cut short by the aunt.

"John Dudley, I do believe you're hungry this minute. The servants have gone to bed. Mary, you go right out into the pantry and get something. I guess you can find where the things have been put."

"Let me go with you, Mary," said Jack, laughing. "Thank you ever so much, Mrs. Wentworth. I really would like a bite."

Jack followed Mary out into the pantry. It was dark, and she found the chain attached to the gas-fixture, and pulled it, illuminating the place. Mary unfastened doors, and began to pull out all manner of good things and hand them to Jack, who took them somewhat awkwardly and set them down. She worked deftly. Both were silent.

"Mary," he said finally, "may I have a dance at the Prom with you?"

"Why, of course, Jack."

She turned and looked at him a minute. There seemed a kind of pathos about him. He was second at football, and now he came in second fiddle also on the Prom question. And yet he was so fine and so genuinely unconscious of his own metal.

"Yes," she thought, "he certainly is a man. If he were a dozen victorious football captains rolled into one, it couldn't add a jot to his worth."

Jack caught something of the sympathy in her gaze. He was absently fingering the little hanging chain attached to the gas-fixture. It caught on the button of his sleeve. He pulled it accidentally and the pantry was dark.

With a laugh of surprise both made a movement toward where the tiny light burned in place of the larger flame, and in doing so, found themselves jostling together. Jack's arms went out involuntarily around the outside of her arms, and then, as he found and clasped her hands in the darkness, he felt her yield and lean backward close to him. He whispered something over her shoulder. For answer he felt her turn and brush his cheek with her lips.

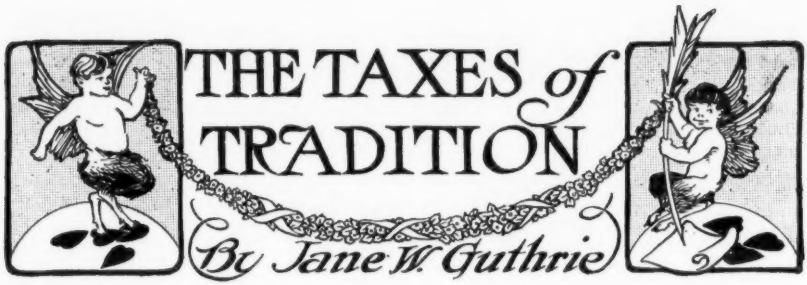
"Mary," he said after a little while, "I thought, when I got in the game today that there wasn't anything else worth having in life left. But there is."

Suddenly, with a little frantic struggle she freed herself, seized the chain quickly and pulled up the light. An approaching footstep, to which Jack was oblivious, had fallen on her ear.

In walked the brother. Had it been the aunt—but then it was the brother.

"How're you people getting on?" he inquired as he threw his huge frame up on a shelf, threatening dire destruction to rattling dishes, reached out for something, and began to eat.

"Gee, but this chicken's good!" he said, just as though he hadn't finished a course dinner a short while before.



ANTWERP'S silent, speculative contemplation of the ashes of his cigar was merely prelusive of inquisitorial speech. Possessed of a quiet, uninterested, and incurious manner, he was in reality one of the most curious of men, and in his own way loved to unlock doors and solve riddles of individuality. Moreover, that absorbed contemplation enabled him to scan from the tail of his eye his niece, Grace Davidge, sitting beside him on the porch, and to secure by judicious and not too hasty selection the least common denominator of understanding between them.

Grace had recently come out of the East to spend the summer with her relatives, the Collins Antwerps, in what Collins Antwerp was pleased to call their exile. That Mrs. Antwerp did not consider it exile to live in this vigorous young West was due, he felt, to moral strabismus; for himself, accustomed as he had been to well-seasoned companions in clubs and cities of sedate and decently tempered age, he encouraged that degree of self-pity which leads one in martyrdom to keep the personal sacrifice well to the front in the contemplation of all beholders. This did not counsel any laxity in business concerns, however; for Antwerp was a shrewd business man and, having come here to dig in a potentially rich soil for the gods of commerce, he was zealously engaged in his own quiet way in doing so.

But Grace—how did it strike her? He wondered as he watched her, and noted her unrevealing eyes and controlled mouth. He remembered her as a headstrong, spoiled young miss, femininely aggressive and detestable, he had thought, since anything too vitally vigorous was irritant to Antwerp; but when on a business trip to the East he had seen her two weeks before, a grown young lady with a social career, family pride asserted itself; he claimed her as his own. Moreover, he observed a shadow in her eyes and a line or two of repression and sadness about her sweet mouth that had no business to be there, and he had said to himself that there was a love-affair lying around loose somewhere, and that the girl needed change of scene. Consequently, he had urged her to go back to the West with him.

She pleased and delighted him, withal she mystified him. He couldn't quite make her out. This, however, he considered her greatest charm, for Antwerp had once given voice to an epigram which so neatly expressed himself, that it had crystallized into a statement of belief by which he judged feminine ability to rouse him to anything but the mildest personal interest. He had asserted that a woman's capacity for mischief, since the creation of mischief is the chief concern of her life, is in exact proportion to her presentment of mystery.

And now, as he observed anew, by those strange secret methods of feminine subtlety which men are never quite able to fathom, Grace, having cast

aside that earlier, detestable envelope of an immature self, had emerged a charming young woman with none of those former characteristics and all of the most desirable hall-marks. Tall and slender, with a splendid crown of brown hair and big gray eyes, she was as graceful and carefully gowned as she was poised and self-contained.

"What is it this afternoon?" he questioned, nodding his head toward the curtained, opened windows from which a low murmur of feminine voices rose now and then to insistent recognition.

"The Humane Society," Grace explained.

"Oh, yes," sighed Antwerp resignedly, "and to-morrow the Bridge Club, and the next day the Church Circle, and the next the Charities Branch, and the following day the Book Club. Mind, Soul and Body, a three-ring circus from which your Aunt Mollie secures diversion," Antwerp laughed with amused, indulgent disdain. "Do you go in for this thing—these club affairs?" he broke in suddenly.

"One or two," acknowledged Grace. "One is obliged to have some club these days, but not like Aunt Mollie, though."

"Oh, I should hope not," groaned Antwerp. "It's a species of intemperance with her. I suppose the medium of intoxication is never the point to consider in dissipation, since anything will do—kerosene for instance. But Mollie's Humane Society—that's the limit!" He amused himself with lightly derisive laughter. "I haven't quite made out why they chose the word 'humane,' for it's a woman's society, and women are anything but humane. They are incontestably savage."

"Oh, Uncle Collins," protested Grace. "That's savage."

Antwerp refused to consider this an interruption. "The women," he continued, "said that the boys around here had been using sling-shots and air-guns on the song-birds, and they brought them before the society for discipline; but the youngsters all swore that they had never pestered anything but sparrows, and complained that they saw no reason why they should be mentally spanked for that, because they had seen Mr. Allaire—Mrs. Allaire is on the committee—wash sparrow's nests from off the house with a hose, and Mr. Thompson—Mrs. Thompson is an active member—burn them with a torch. And one very fresh little boy"—Antwerp chuckled delightedly—"told Mollie that he had seen our man throw nests of young ones out from under the eaves of our house. Sparrows are a confounded nuisance," conceded Antwerp, "and the discipline was ineffectual.

"And now, to-day, they've got one of their own members on the rack. At least, Mollie told me they would have." Antwerp's smile had a keen edge of irony on it. "This woman has three boys ten, twelve, and fourteen years of age; and the boys raise chickens. We're pretty near the woods here where wild and unmentionable animals domicile, and the chickens need protection. So, the boys, imitating Nature, 'red in tooth and claw,' got a porcupine on some of their excursions, and they keep it tethered to war upon the polecats which prey upon the little chickens. Mollie told me this morning that the society can't quite make out whether the woman ought to be disciplined or congratulated. But the point of that story is that it was a woman who put the society in a quandary and the position of judge. A woman whose cherished dog wars upon the porcupine to his sorrow and her rage; and because she has no abstract love of animals, but a very concrete objection to Mrs. Wardall, her boys, and the chickens, she complains to the society of the cruelty of keeping wild animals in degrading and domestic subjection."

"There's nothing so very strange and uncivilized about that," objected Grace, with a preoccupied air as if the subject only half caught her attention. "That's human nature, all the same the world over, regardless of sex or quality. Perhaps you have misjudged the informer."

Antwerp noted with a rather dry smile that, even though indifferent, Grace was controversially and contra-

dictorily inclined. Some of the youthful mannerisms had not been obliterated, after all. He was rather piqued by her lack of interest, and he observed her more closely as she sat facing the splendid sweep of water before them, the city climbing up the sides of the hill from which they gained their outlook. Suddenly, she sat forward eagerly as a large red touring-car drew up in front of the house on the opposite corner, and a distinguished-looking woman came out, and taking the wheel from the chauffeur drove off alone.

"Who is she?" questioned Grace, turning to her uncle. "I have wondered about her ever since I have been here. She seems to live in that machine. She is always alone or with her husband, and Aunt Mollie pretends that she does not know her name; but you walk down-town every morning with her husband. She interests me more than any one I have seen here, and yet no one knows her. There is a general air of good-will and lack of formality here, too. What is the mystery, Uncle Collins?"

Antwerp evaded the latter question. "Freedom from formality! Don't fret yourself, Grace," he grinned amusedly, appreciatively. "You may imagine that because we live in a new country, and in the absence of social tradition, there is a lax code. You are mistaken, my dear. They hug their cloaks of conventionality far closer to them than they do back in your East, and they are five times as particular about the collection of anise, mint, and cummin, the taxes of tradition. It is that very thing of having left it behind that makes them cling to the shadow of social tradition."

Antwerp blew a long line of smoke from his cigar, and carefully contemplated its dissolving spirals.

After a few moments of silence, he spoke with apparent and considered irrelevance: "We are apt to consider Hawthorne merely the portrayer of social conditions of a bygone era; but he was universal. Hester Prynne, his most immortal character, in her isolation of love glorified to martyrdom, was merely a type. We see the same sentence dealt out to-day, when any member of the body social elects to create a new or individual path for living his or her own way.

"That's why I object to the Humane Society. Society is never humane. It pillories its members on the merest pretexts, and justice or mercy is not taken into consideration. Animals have the same instinct to tear to pieces the weak or uncommon. That's why I say we are savage. I am merely an amused and cynical observer of life, my dear. The accustomed ways are good enough for me. They demand no exertion; but I have observed that those who plant the footsteps in which flowers spring up in the rocky paths of life are those who have the daring of their convictions and the courage to live their own lives."

"Who is she?" demanded Grace insistently.

"A very charming and gifted woman, I understand," Antwerp replied, with a half-concealed sigh over Grace's persistence. "The women here have built up a spite-wall which shuts out her social sunlight, and used their air-guns and sling-shots on her. But she sticks it out magnificently; and just as an observer, you understand, I am watching to see how it will turn out. It's a fine subject for speculation in feminine standards."

Antwerp smoked lazily. He noted that Grace was more interested than he had yet seen her.

"And the men?" she asked in a low voice.

"Cowards," replied Antwerp promptly and succinctly. "We are all business associates of her husband, and we allowed the women to dictate the social sentence that has been dealt her. At first, I fancy it was merely hesitation, and then, as she met that haughtily, it hardened into the spite-wall. It happened before our advent. Better let it alone, Grace. It is not a simple problem."

"I want you to tell me about her," said Grace definitely, and Antwerp, re-

flecting on the folly of imagining that a leopard could change its spots, recognized the same headstrong qualities that he had so deplored in Grace's youthful presentment. He decided to tell her the story as baldly as possible. He knew that she was determined to hear it.

"To these people here," he said, "she is the modern variation on the theme of Hester Prynne. I believe that, as a business man, his acumen and foresight saved and developed for her and her mother the only piece of property left to them after the death of the husband and father, a former friend of his. Conditions were very crude here then and he, like many other men, lived devoid of family ties, but in his case it was because his wife absolutely refused to consider life here, or enter into his ambitions and business efforts, leaving him to travel back and forth between this and his former home in an effort to preserve harmony in family relations.

"When he fell ill of typhoid fever at a hotel with no conveniences, for there were no trained nurses here then, the mother and daughter took him to their home and nursed him with devotion and care; but the wife arriving upon the scene, and, as is the way with some women, refusing to allow other women to value that which they themselves regard indifferently, demanded that he be again taken to the hotel. She created so many scenes that the physician in charge drove her from the house, and insisted that the young woman continue her ministrations, since the man was desperately ill by this time and he needed some one upon whom he could rely.

"The girl nearly killed herself in the long siege, and I fancy kept up merely on her will-power and nerve; but the wife took it in high dudgeon, and after setting gossip afloat and creating vast and hysterical sympathy for herself, went back East vowing vengeance. Fortunately, it must be so considered, she died a week after her return, and during his long convalescence the man and the girl were quietly married, neither of them, apparently, caring to pay deference to hypocrisy in a conventional period of mourning. They went away together to recuperate, for the girl was almost as much of a wreck as he. She was worn out with the strain under which she had never faltered."

"Are they happy?" asked Grace, looking with curious, frightened eyes toward that house across the way with the invisible circumference of a social boycott about it.

Antwerp, observing her out of the tail of his eye, over the ashes of his cigar, noticed that her face had changed until it looked strained and old.

"I believe they are ideally happy. She is devoted to him, and he to her. He was undoubtedly miserably unhappy in his first marriage. She is said to be an angel to the poor and needy, and to expend her energies on a baby hospital which is a model of administrative ability under her direction. She seems to get her sole diversion, however, in driving that big car. It is merely symbolic, though. She is capable of handling big things—big situations. Better not discuss the subject while you are here, Grace, and forget it." Antwerp spoke with a degree of authority and command.

"But I want to know her name," objected Grace.

"Mrs. Beverly Meade," replied her uncle shortly, a trifle testily. He turned sharply, however, as he felt, rather than saw Grace lift her hand quickly to her mouth as if she would repress an exclamation, and noted that the flood of scarlet, which had swept over her face and neck even to the very tips of her ears, had receded leaving her ghastly pale.

Antwerp's eyes dropped to his shoes. He smoked quietly; then he said gently, interrogatively: "Have you ever met either of them?"

"The Meades?" queried Grace, and to the quick ear of her uncle there was something, he fancied, of an edge on her voice. "I never saw Mr. or Mrs. Beverly Meade before in my life. I did not know that they lived here."

This very prompt denial afforded the information Antwerp was seeking. If

Grace did not know Beverly Meade or his wife, she knew of them very well.

"Mrs. Meade is a very remarkable woman, I imagine," Antwerp continued smoothly. "It is her magnificent pluck that I admire. She came back, expecting doubtless, if she thought about it at all, in the absence of social tradition, to refute the charges of breaking up a man's home, the absurdity of which lay in the fact that he had never had a home. She met this cold, hesitant reserve, and saw the gradual building of that spite-wall about her life; and she never put out a finger to stop it. There are dozens of ways by which she might have torn it down or prevented it; but she showed herself absolutely indifferent to it, and refused even to turn her husband's business battering-rams against it; and in that indifference lies, I fancy, her greatest offense. She has gone on staying here when many women would have insisted on moving away, living her own life, broadening it by study and travel and good deeds. So they say—myself I do not know." Antwerp spread out his hands with a gesture of impersonal knowledge. "And since we consider the highest civilization to be merely the capacity to live our own lives and let our neighbors live theirs, she is very civilized. They take her own and her husband's contributions for their charities, I am told," he observed mildly.

Grace was not moved to speech to unburden her mind, and after a little while, she rose and went into the house, while Antwerp smoked out another cigar, and mused and pondered.

Thereafter he camped upon Beverly Meade's business trails. He was fond of Grace, and he wanted to know how the Meades had written themselves, however remotely, into her life.

Grace, however, seemed to have forgotten all about the Meades. She never referred to them again, and plunged heartily and a trifle feverishly into the social problem prepared for her by Mrs. Collins Antwerp. Mrs. Antwerp was not one to deny herself the pleasure of being "near the rose"; and when one has an attractive and charming young woman to present to one's friends, one must do it as spectacularly as possible, or the reflection of one's self does not sufficiently shine.

Mrs. Antwerp's energies, therefore, included balls and boating, golf and cards, motor-trips and water-parties—a continual round; but always, through all the excitement and stir and movement, to Antwerp's observing consideration Grace's eyes asked a question. The lurking shadow that he had seen there at first had deepened to a look of expectation, as if thought were ever on the alert to prevent a surprise; but even the eyes kept their secret.

One afternoon in August she was sitting upon the porch with her uncle. The panorama of sky and city, water and wind-swept pines, was enchantingly spread out before them. Antwerp was abstractedly observing the ashes at the end of his cigar in his peculiar fashion of observing other things.

"Ever hear of a man named Jim Meade?" he asked lazily, a trifle indifferently. He felt rather than saw her quick start as she sat beside him, and the look of expectation widen in her eyes as she turned to face the house across the street; and then, her secured self-control.

"Yes," she answered, "I used to know a man named Jim Meade very well. It is not an uncommon name."

"A relative of Beverly Meade's?"

"Yes. The man I knew was Beverly Meade's brother. He used to talk a great deal about this brother of whom he was very fond."

"Well, then, the Meades—the brothers—have made a big find of ore on the range; and I've secured all of the adjoining lots. If they ever want to develop that find into a mine, they'll have to take the owner of those lots into account. Jim Meade has been conducting the exploration work, and although they worked only at night, and by the most primitive methods, in order to balk observation, still my timber-cruiser knew everything that happened, and when they made their find, he got word to me before Jim Meade's man got to his brother."

"What *do* you mean?" asked Grace sharply, facing round.

"Oh, nothing—just a little fashion of bringing notice to my neighbor that he has been indiscreet and that I've been smart enough to use his knowledge to my own convenience. Doubtless Beverly Meade will have something to say to brother James, since he's been financing operations. I told you we were savages up here, Grace."

Grace's eyes were blazing; there was no unrevealing look in them now. She faced her uncle with high and furious disdain. She reminded him distinctly of her immature days.

"Uncle Collins! Do you mean to tell me that you boast of such dealings as business? That you gloat over the fact of having beaten Jim Meade and discredited his management with his brother?"

Grace was sitting on the edge of her chair, and her voice had a ringing vibrant note which made it strangely musical, and she was handsomer than Antwerp had ever seen her, with her scarlet cheeks and her big blazing gray eyes. He blew out a cloud of smoke and settled a trifle more luxuriously down in his chair.

"Beverly Meade is too comfortably rich already, even if his brother Jim is only moderately well off and has the brains of the family. Jim needs to get his wits sharpened, and a jolt now and then is good for a man. But why"—he turned to his niece, innocently, inquiringly—"why are you so interested in Jim Meade?"

"Because"—Grace's voice was as clear and ringing as a bell now, if pitched a trifle high—"because I played false to Jim Meade, myself. He can't think highly of my family honor." Her words were a trifle unsteady and her smile satirically scornful.

"I—I—broke my engagement to him, because I couldn't make him disloyal to his brother; and—I cared for him!—oh! I cared for him——" Her lips shook and her eyes misted a trifle like clear pools when a cloud passes over them. "I knew how good his brother had always been to him, had educated him and cared for him. He owed much to that brother's affection and consideration—Jim is much younger than Beverly. And he was so fond of Beverly's wife—this Mrs. Meade. He always spoke of her with the greatest love and reverence for her capacity to restore happiness to Beverly's life which had been one of unexampled patience in unhappiness.

"I hated the whole story, and I feared the voice of public comment, and in my own petty, small social code of cowardice I said that he should chose between us, since as things were then, if I married him I should have to be much with the Beverly Meades. And—he chose them. I don't blame him. If I wasn't big enough to let somebody else's life alone and busy myself about living my own, I wasn't big enough for Jim Meade and he knew it. I scorned her; and I said all sorts of horrible things about her to him."

She rose to her feet, her face as white as chalk, her eyes dark and luminous with feeling, her lips shaking slightly.

"I'm going—I'm going to beg Mrs. Meade to forgive me. I'm going to ask her pardon on my knees. I believe the whole world—you—everybody is in league to injure the Meades if they can."

Her voice broke in a half-sob. She stumbled into the house.

Antwerp blew a long, thin thread of blue smoke from his lips, watching it curl slowly up into the air and dissolve into nothingness. Then he smiled a slow smile with something of pleased satisfaction in it. He watched Grace, her head held high, step across the roadway and go into the house in front of which a big red touring-car stood waiting.

Then Antwerp rose and went into his own house.

"Mollie," he said to Mrs. Antwerp who was sitting in the library at her desk, "what do your clubs teach you is the most compelling instinct in woman?"

"Why, Collins," queried his wife in surprise, "what an absurd question!

We don't go into that kind of thing in our clubs. You had better look up Herbert Spencer. You may find he has something about it. I don't know the answer to it, though."

"No-o-o," agreed Antwerp, walking slowly up and down the floor with a whimsical smile upon his lips. "It's merely an abstract question, Mollie. Merely a concern of conjecture in regard to feminine emotions. I can answer it myself. The most compelling motive in a woman is the instinct of protection for what is, or what she considers, her own. She'll go through fire and water to keep it from harm and to shield it in disaster, and she'll sacrifice herself if need be in the attempt. It is the thing that lifts her out of savagery, and even savages and animals possess it. It is worth studying."

Mrs. Antwerp smiled vaguely, uncomprehendingly. Collins had a way of talking nonsense now and then, she reflected. He was sentimental and impractical always.

Just at this moment, however, Grace came into the house like a whirlwind, with a white, scared face and eyes that shone like stars, and great dark circles of terror around them. She stood for a moment at the doorway before she spoke, a vision of tragic import. Unconsciously, she seemed to tower, drawn up to some transfigured height apparently, to the two watching her in startled alarm, as if in some self-projection the girl Grace were removed to some remote spot.

"I am going with Mrs. Meade," she announced in a still, unemotional voice, that carried disaster in its very tones of quiet. "I want my heavy wraps."

She disappeared, and almost before they had caught their breath she was back again.

"Jim—Jim"—there was a heart-break in her tones now—"is in the woods. A tree fell on him. He is still"—she caught her breath—"still alive and I am going to him." There was a sob of ecstatic triumph in those last words, and before the watching two could speak to her she was gone.

Moving to the window, the Antwerps saw Mrs. Meade at the wheel of the big red touring-car which she drove at such a tremendous speed when she could. Grace climbed up beside her, and the car swept swiftly out into the roadway and turned toward the west with the two women sitting together on the front seat. At the top of the hill, poised for a second or two, they were silhouetted against the brilliant sky of afternoon, visions of vivid life, as if no shadow of death were possible to either of them; and then they dropped down behind the hill.

Toward midnight the Antwerps, waiting in trying suspense, heard far off the drumming sound of the coming motor borne on the still night air.

"I am going over," said Antwerp.

"So am I," said his wife.

They were standing on the steps of the Meade house, waiting to greet and offer help to their neighbors with their burden of sorrow, when the car was driven there.

The next morning, Grace came over to her uncle's for breakfast. She was quiet and composed, but very pale after a long night vigil. As she sat down beside Antwerp, he put out his hand and laid it affectionately over hers.

"I take it all back, Grace," he said. "Women aren't savages. They are saviors."

"Oh!" She turned swiftly to him. "She was magnificent!" The tears rushed to her eyes. "I shall never be able to tell you about her—that ride. The roads through the iron country are red—red as if stained with blood. They filled me with anguish and despair. And the miles and miles through the forest—long aisles of tall, straight trees that shut out the sunlight and left us moving through a hideous half-green gloom like an Inferno. Out in the open, where the forests had been cut down and roads made, the fields and waysides were filled with barbaric spreads of yellow and flaunting red and purple flowers, as if a gigantic palette had spilled and smeared raw color on the unfinished land. It seemed to mock and jeer at us. Mrs. Meade drove like the wind when she could, and she picked

her way through long stretches of mud, and skirted swamps, and *felt* the wheels around stumps and over the rocks in the streams.

"Once in a while she would put her hand out and lay it on mine and say: 'Steady!' And it was a command to me. Just to see her at the wheel, strong, sure and controlled, was an inspiration. I knew that if anything could save Jim, she could.

"Why, Uncle Collins"—Grace's eyes brimmed over and her voice shook with feeling—"I don't wonder that those two men adore her and would do anything on earth for her. Just to sit beside her watching, feeling her drive that great machine through that wild, untamed country, finding her way somehow on such an errand—to save the life of a man who had stood by her in her trouble—made you glad to be alive.

"She had gone up to see him once a month, she and her husband, to be sure that he was well and comfortable; and when he was hurt, it was to her the message was sent. A man got out and cut in on a line and had the message wired to her. She has spent herself in thought for the care and comfort of her husband and his brother, and they repay her in devotion to her; and—I—I had done the best I could to break and wreck the life of the only man I ever loved, and taught him to have a small estimate of my kind because I made myself her judge—did what you told me all these silly people here have done.

"And Jim—she got to him so quickly with the surgeon she picked up at one of the mines on the way, and she knew just what to do so perfectly, that she and the surgeon had him fixed up for the trip home and we were on our way back before we met her husband and the surgeon he was bringing. She had telephoned him down-town before we left, directing him to follow us.

"And oh! Just to see her bring him home! She had watched and noted like an Indian every step of that way so as to know how to drive coming home in the dark. The surgeons say that it saved Jim's life—getting him here. The fracture of the skull is slight, and he is recovering from the shock. I believe he knows her this morning. I am sure that he will get well if she will care for him. The surgeons say there is every hope."

Grace stopped for a moment, and then a slow flush crept up her face.

"Uncle Collins." She put out her hand toward her uncle's. "I'm sorry I spoke to you as I did yesterday. I take it all back. Nothing but Jim is worth thinking about now; I don't feel resentful toward any one; I want to be at peace with all the world, now that I have him again"—she stopped involuntarily a moment and caught her breath as she almost whispered—"if he will have me."

"It is all right, my dear. Forget it!" Antwerp laughed a trifle unsteadily. "The land surrounding the Meades' is yours. It's to be your wedding-present."

TO A STREET ORGAN MELODY

FLUNG out upon the air through mists of snow,
Straight to the heart it rises from below,
That song so late Love's own!
A year ago
The world went mad beneath its subtle sweet;
Nothing so sad save one girl's face I know—
Wherein remembered beauty lingers, though
No longer queen of courtly revels now,
Grown sordid, half-desired, she as thou
Has wandered from Love's halls upon the street!

MARTHA GILBERT DICKINSON BIANCHI.

IN MUSICLAND

By William Armstrong

A MAN would better be born with a personality than with an automobile in his mouth; the one will carry him farther than the other. And with Franz Lehár, the composer of "The Merry Widow," this trait of personality seems of the kind that takes him straightway into people's hearts. To know that he stays there, once having entered, you need only to sit with him for half an hour any summer afternoon at one of the tables in front of Café Heinrichshof, across from the Imperial Opera, where half musical Vienna finds time in its leisurely life to spend two hours a day over a cup of black coffee.

Every man has a good word, and every woman a smile ready for Franz Lehár; none seems to call him Franz only, both names invariably go together; respect appears to demand the surname, and personal attachment requires that the Franz must also go with it.

One afternoon as we sat there, trying to achieve to six sentences of uninterrupted conversation, a photographer planted his tripod on the curb, and leveled his camera. Up sprang Lehár, grabbing my arm. "We'll be photographed together!"

In that moment two operetta prima donnas at the next table saw what was coming. Each took him by an arm. "Franz Lehár! We must be photographed with Franz Lehár!"

Down the rows of tables men caught it, and dragging their chairs with them to stand on, they made a pyramid back of him, to be in the picture. Other celebrities were there, and the photographer proceeded to catch them, but the café rustled back into place again over its coffee.

Of Lehár's life-fight stray bits have found their way to the world; his early boyhood, spent in wandering from one barracks-town to another, the son of a Hungarian, peasant-born, military bandmaster, a man who handed down strong traits of character as well as talent to the boy who was to make the name famous; his studies at the Prague Conservatory, with an allowance so spare to exist on that he has fainted from hunger in the streets; his determination in spite of it all to be a composer and not a violinist, as his father destined, these but in part intimate his experiences.

Lehár had won before "The Merry Widow" brought him independence, but he had never been able to profit by it. Thousands of *Kronen* found their way into his publishers' pockets, but very few into his own. One march alone, from his first success, "Vienna Women," brought its owner an equivalent of

ten thousand dollars; circumstances had compelled the composer to sell the whole operetta for two hundred.

His first works had all been serious, suites, sonatas, and the like; the composers Fibich, Dvorak, and Brahms had indorsed them. It was Dvorak who said to him: "Hang your violin on a nail, and be rather a composer." And so the boy wrote on and on, always hoping, no stranger to want.

Finally, realizing, as he himself would not realize, the unequal conflict he had entered on, his father commanded him back to violin study until his finishing at the Prague Conservatory.

The career that followed was varied, so varied that Lehár smiled as he told of it. Only this fatal phase remained unchanged, whether the income was small or smaller it vanished almost before it had time to get into his pocketbook. One position followed another with fantastic quickness. How could a boy with new melodies chasing about in his head from dawn until dark fit into impossible grooves?

His first post was as solo violinist, then as concertmeister at Barmen-Elberfeld, but in months there he found time between eternal rehearsals to compose only one song. So he departed between dusk and dawn, leaving a broken contract behind him, and turned up as player in his father's band, stationed at Vienna.

Then he became himself in turn regimental bandmaster, naval bandmaster, and regimental bandmaster again, as one situation after another grew unbearable, changing from post to post, at times in remote, poverty-stricken townlets where he not only rehearsed the soldier players, but taught them the rudiments of music.

In those days composition was out of all question, day brought drudging routine, night some sort of recruit from exhaustion.

The strain of it all would have brought hopelessness to most men, but in the nature of Lehár there is a blessed elasticity, an ability to smile at ill luck, from the mere fact that it is so ill, a combination perhaps of sense of humor as well as of courage. And if we stop to think of it, it is hard to tell, oftentimes, where the one of these virtues leaves off and the other begins.

There is, too, with the man, along with an invincible willingness to fight, a haphazard daring that comes likely from his Hungarian blood. When he reached the unbearable he threw everything overboard, and without prospect ahead plunged back into the world and life again, generally going to Vienna to find them. That saved him.

In all this period if any chance came it was given feverishly to composing, at first to more serious things, then with a turn toward the lighter operatic stage. When success did arrive, it came with a rush that carried his "Merry Widow" on a longer journey than any bride yet had in her honeymoon.

But there is that in Lehár's bearing and muscular build, more of the soldier type than the musician, a something which suggests that he would have kept on working, exactly as he is now, with success or without it. The music was in him, he had to give it out, even though its notes lay silent and black between closed pages.

The hard things in his life Lehár touched on without regret that he had to go through them. On the contrary he said: "I am glad that I suffered; no man knows what he has in him or what he can do until he has been through pretty well all he can bear, and of all men this is true of the composer.

"I am a Bohemian, not in the sense of carousing, for two glasses of beer and two cigarettes make my day's dissipation. But I tell you what I do like, and in that sense I am a Bohemian; to be free to live my day and my night as I will; to dine at twelve, to dine at six, or, if I forget it, to dine not at all; to go to bed to-night, or if not to-night, and I want to work, then to-morrow night instead.

"I shall not marry, for it seems to me, and I have thought as every man is called on to think, that my art would suffer. My whole present life, just as my past, has meant absorption in it. If a man composes, and would do all

that is in him, he needs his whole individual self and time independent to accomplish it. All my life has been a struggle for independence and freedom to live by composing. Now, thank God, I have reached it.

"Some may hold the writing of operettas as less artistic and needing less profound musical knowledge than other forms; I do not. Is a *genre* picture full of life less an art work than a great historical picture if both are painted with equal finish?

"There is never a moment that I am without musical thoughts, they are in my mind no matter where I may be. In winter, in Vienna, I can do nothing but prepare performances, conduct, and —think. In the summer I go down to Ischl, and when I feel the mood coming over me I compose, perhaps all day, perhaps all night, as it happens. But I must be alone, absolutely alone; even to know that there is some one in the adjoining room to me is to be uncomfortable.

"How did I come to write 'The Merry Widow' waltz? It all came about by the accident of a suggestion. As I composed the operetta originally it did not occur at all. A climax was needed to carry a certain situation in which a dialogue occurred. To accompany the dialogue I wrote some bars of music that the characters might dance, to give life to the scene. In rehearsal the effect came to light, and suddenly the idea dawned as to what I might make out of it, and that idea expanded until what was originally planned as a tributary situation, grew into the climax of the whole piece."

When Lehár talks to you, he looks straight into your eyes; he has had his fight with life, but it has left no scars to hide; his manner is full of a happy, boyish earnestness, but with a heavenly freedom from taking himself too seriously.

He impresses one as regarding his work as the all absorbing thing both of life and energies; but on the other hand there are two sides to his nature, as there must be with every man who is fully developed; there is the full-hearted daring that comes from his Hungarian birth, and there is the pure love of living, for the agreeable sake of life, that is Viennese, for the stamp of the Kaiserstadt is on him. And when you are with him you are delighted to know that things have finally gone so well with him, but you are, perhaps, even more pleased to know that success has left him such a rarely good-hearted fellow.

Just now he is full of enthusiasm over his new operetta, "Fürstenkind," which he is coming to New York to conduct this season, an operetta the scene of which is placed in modern Greece, with splendid possibilities in the pictures, allowed by the contrasting double life of the courtier, bandit-chief hero, at one point at the king's palace, at another leading his brigands in the mountains.

Under his windows crawls the Danube, yellow and thick with mud, the same that Strauss made famous, as well as himself, when he wrote the waltz that named it "Beautiful" and "Blue." And like him Oscar Straus, the composer of "A Waltz Dream," is eminently a Viennese, and by triple right; birth, living on the Danube, and the writing of operettas. From his study you have a view of the river and its right bank from the Franzeus to the Aspern bridge; within doors you have an index to his achievements.

Rarely has such intimate panorama been granted me as that in which I found myself enveloped as I awaited his entrance.

The study walls, up to the ceiling, are hung with broad ribbons from laurel-wreaths, bearing legends of "Waltz Dream" performances; framed theater-posters announcing "Waltz Dream" performances; silver wreaths, a gold wreath, resting in its carefully opened, velvet-lined box; all souvenirs of "Waltz Dream" performances; portraits of the composer himself, one of them appropriately framed in a wide band of gilt laurel leaves, and resting on a tall easel; photographs of various casts that have sung in "Waltz Dream,"

the composer a central figure of the several groups. In one corner is a phonograph, its yellow horn glistening as if with impatience to pipe forth something from "Waltz Dream." Back of it, in modest retirement, is a bust of Beethoven, the only other composer-celebrity present. Above this image of a colleague is a decoration of red paper roses bearing the figures "300"; at first I thought it might be in commemoration of the three-hundredth performance of the "Ninth Symphony"; but I had erred, it also was a memento of "Waltz Dream," its three-hundredth presentation, and a delicate compliment from a colleague, who thus generously shares a glorious present with a glorious past.

In these memorial surroundings, Herr Straus communes with his muse. And I had never seen a "Waltz Dream" performance! When Herr Straus entered I had to confess it. I knew the painful question would be forthcoming, but the negative answer was more calmly received than I had expected. Then I learned why, and I also learned that the composer has his own way of thinking, firm, decided, and, from what I could discover, unalterable. Some of his ideas will find an echo of joyful response in the hearts of American critics.

"I would say this," he declared presently. "When I tell American managers, 'But that is not art,' they answer, 'No, but it is business.' I know that there is a different taste existing in each and every country, but that does not pardon the fact that in London, and in New York especially, much that did not exist in the original, both in text and music, and with which I had nothing to do, was introduced into 'A Waltz Dream.'

"I am not partial to being interviewed, but when I was interviewed in London I was misquoted. That, in consequence, called forth a letter from Mr. Frohman telling me that my presence there had done more harm than good. Think of it! And I had gone over at my own expense to assist in the production! My reply to him was: 'If you make such success by altering an original, why don't you write your pieces yourself?'"

There you have it, neatly, but completely. Far be it from me to tell any man how to manage his affairs, I have too much trouble in managing my own. In every "world city" managers have complications enough to consider. There is that great class that uses the theater as a resting-place between dinner and late supper, that looks on "art" as a sort of stepping-stone to broiled lobster; for such, things have to be put down a few dozen pegs. There is the class, too, that toils itself humpbacked by day, either through choice or necessity, and still has the courage to wish to be amused by night; and surely it deserves some attention.

There are plenty more classes also to be considered, how many only heaven, the manager, and the box-office know, and there is as well the class that remains at home because the managers give it so little to go to. Perhaps this last might, for variety's sake, sometimes enjoy an operetta just as its author and composer designed it to be. Who can tell?

Herr Straus' views on American managers may become still more crystallized when he hears the quoted words of his latest New York impresario, Mr. Whitney:

"'Arms and the Man,' Straus' new operetta that I have secured for America? What is it? Well, being an operetta, I suppose it is legs and the girl."

But as the composer himself is coming over, he may be the one, this time, to make amputations.

"In the autumn I shall go to New York," said Herr Straus that afternoon on the Danube. "I have been invited to conduct at the Irving Place Theater.

"The original text of a new operetta that I am at work on is by Sardou, 'La Marquise.' I have retained for it one of the librettists of 'A Waltz Dream,' and engaged an unknown writer in whom I place reliance, to assist him.

"I do not believe in always employing the same librettist, any more than I believe in making the libretto in rehearsal; the desk is the place for such things.

"'Bernard Shaw?' No, I have never

met him, though in London I had the opportunity to do so. I hear he is a very extravagant type of person, and as I was writing the music to a libretto on his comedy 'Arms and the Man,' it seemed wiser not to make his acquaintance."

Need it be repeated that Herr Straus is a man of thought?

Eduard Strauss was for twenty years court ball director to the Emperor Franz Josef of Austria; his gay recollections of them should be innumerable. Strauss' melodies have set half the feet in the world to dancing; naturally one would expect him to be of the gayest of temperaments. But, perhaps on the plan of the proverb that allows the shoemaker's children to go barefoot, his stock of gayety had been entirely dispensed to outsiders. That remained to be seen after I got there.

Arriving one chill, gray morning in Vienna, I climbed four flights of stairs in the Reichsrath Strasse in search of the *herr direktor* and his gay recollections, his anecdotes of royalties of two decades, and his glimpses of court life through a musician's spectacles; something to make me forget the belated coming of summer.

His acquaintance I had made in America on his last tour there; then his sprightliness of mood had not been particularly active. But on tour whose is?

"Herr Strauss was at home, and would be pleased to receive me." That being settled, I waited—and waited.

The clocks—there were many of them on the walls and tables of the salon and adjoining apartment—ticked solemnly on; no two marked the same hour. Presently twelve o'clock came; one clock chiming after the other. I counted ninety-six strokes. The arrangement was ideal for one troubled with insomnia.

Herr Strauss entered. Though past his seventieth birthday, never, except in the case of the grandfathers of the Paris Boulevards, have I seen hair and mustaches of such inky blackness. Then I began to understand why I had waited until the clocks had struck ninety-six before he was ready to see me.

"You are well," I asserted positively. It would have seemed impolite to say anything else to a man who could evade seventy without a single white hair.

"I am not," he returned in a tone of equal decision. "My arm is still stiff from the railway accident I was in in America. Do you know, if I shut my left eye I could not see you with my right one? I once had a cataract on it."

It was not a cheerful beginning.

"But you didn't bring the cataract back with you, too?" I asked.

It was an absent-minded speech on the spur of the moment; so many foreigners care for nothing else that we have in America but Niagara.

"No, but I brought the swamp fever; that was the trip before last," he replied.

There was neither regret nor animosity in his tone, which was instead quite interested, so interested that I almost felt a pang of regret at being unable to tell him that I had brought him a package of his favorite bacteria.

"For weeks before I had the swamp fever—you would call it malaria, but I prefer swamp fever—I felt that I should be ill. I was entirely too well not to be anxious."

"But you feel no ill effects from it now?" I asked, with just enough solicitation to indicate that I expected a negative answer.

"I haven't *forgotten* it yet," he retorted tenaciously. "Now, seated here, with my good eye shut——"

"But *don't* shut it!" My tone was so imperative that I felt mortified, and very like begging him to follow any plan that he might most enjoy.

"Of course," I went on hurriedly, to distract attention, "you have traveled so much that your store of experience is wide, and——" How was I to get away from diseases to court balls and perhaps cheerfulness?

"Do you see this furniture? Good! Nearly all of it I collected on my travels."

There was something, then, that he collected besides ailments.

"And what do you think? When my wife left me, she tried to take it with her; she said it was hers. 'The clocks, too?' Yes. There are only eight of them in these two rooms, but I have others from Switzerland, Italy, everywhere."

I felt like shaking hands with the lot of them, for by that time he was telling me that not one had anything wrong with it. Each was a perfect timekeeper, too, he added. And there they shamelessly hung with no two pointing alike.

"Clocks make a well-ordered household," I interrupted flatly.

"Well-ordered household!"

Again I had plunged into a wrong lead. As he spoke he darted toward the bell-button, looking at the palm of his hand as he went. Behind him, on the table where it had rested, was its imprint boldly defined in the dust.

Gently I tried to call him away from the lecture he was reading a servant, violently whisking a dust-brush, and asked about his pictures; souvenirs of travel they appeared to be also, Vesuvius and other items of nature in violent eruption in the primary colors.

Ignoring the pictures, and opening a cabinet-table, he took out his decorations, seventeen of them in all, heavily jeweled, and from different sovereigns. Now was my chance!

"You conducted at all the court balls for years, did you not?"

"Balls, *and* dinners," he added, to be literal. "Especially during the great Exposition, when there were so many visiting royalties, and it rained all the time. Then I was at the Hofburg almost every night; the only way to entertain them was at dinner. Awful weather it was, just the weather to catch——"

"But you kept well, you said you were there almost every evening," I interrupted, not wishing the theme wrecked on pulmonary troubles. "And you must recall many brilliant scenes."

"It was nice; this carpet I bought in England."

If it must be geography I would be with him! It was desperate. "And in Russia, you conducted there, too? Did you play at any court functions?"

"Ah, now you have it! I have something interesting for you to write about. I had the cholera in Russia. It was prevalent when I got there; I felt sure I should have it, and I did. I was ill for three weeks, and not one of the orchestra had a touch of it. Now, what do you think of that?"

The various timepieces were striking again, separately, until I counted eight. It was one o'clock, and the court ball had developed into a clinic.

"I really feel that I have kept you too long," I said. "I must be going."

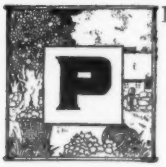
"Wait, I have the most interesting thing of all yet to show you. Come with me?"

We returned to the room where we had viewed the seventeen decorations. Hurrying to a desk, he picked up a small, glass-stoppered bottle half-full with alcohol, in which there floated an object.

"That," he said triumphantly, holding it against the light, "is the cataract that I had taken from my eye!"

LOVED AMANDA

By Owen Oliver



EOPLE said that I was a hard woman. Perhaps they were right. I loved my son, and I had no love left for other people. He was my only child and I was a widow. I spelt the world with four letters: J-O-H-N.

I gave up my youth for him; deserted my friends to be his nurse, turned away from lovers to be a mother; learned Latin and Greek to teach him; curbed my strong temper to be an example to him. I had been considered a handsome woman and a clever one. I spent my looks and brains on John.

He paid me well for the investment. He was a good boy and he grew up a good man; a big, handsome fellow; not very clever, but quietly capable and good-humoredly resolute; a man's man, and above everything a sportsman and a gentleman.

My husband's brother took him into business, and he did very well. He devoted his holidays and his leisure to athletic sports. He was a county cricketer, a noted football-player, a fencer and a runner, and could ride a horse or sail a yacht with any one.

He was popular enough with women, but, as I have said, he preferred men. I was glad of that. I did not want him to marry until I had found the right wife for him, and I did not hurry in my search. So he came to be thirty, and I had never seen the woman worthy to marry my boy.

Then I had a bad attack of influenza. I could not brush illness aside now, I found, as I had always done, and I realized that I was fifty-six, and he would want some one to care for him when I was gone. I decided that it was time for him to marry; and that he had come to an age when his judgment of the woman to suit him was likely to be better than mine; and anyhow he was likely to follow his own judgment, for though he was not so clever as I he was no weakling in mind. So one evening I spoke to him about it.

He laughed and stroked my hair—he was always an affectionate son. There was plenty of time, he said, and he was waiting for Miss Right to come along. "And then," he said, "I expect you'll say she's Miss Wrong." He laughed again, and I detected an uneasiness under his laughter.

"Probably," I said. "But if I were satisfied that she would always be Mrs. Right to you, I should prefer you to follow your own mistaken opinion, and be happy. Who is it, John?"

"There isn't anybody," he said. "At least—— Well, not at present. Sometimes I think there's a little girl growing up for me."

My heart sank like a weight. He could mean only one girl; but I raised my eyebrows as if I were puzzled. I think I made a mistake there. It is not easy to deceive John.

"And who is the little girl?" I asked. "Light a cigarette, my boy. You'll talk better then."

"What a wise old mother!" He lit his cigarette and laughed again; and again the laugh sounded uneasy. "It's rather nonsensical," he owned, "but somehow I always liked—the little girl—even when she was a baby. She was such a funny, naughty little thing! I remember, when I was fifteen and she was three, and she climbed upon my knee, and said 'kiss.' You know how

much boys like kissing babies! But—I don't suppose it will come to anything, you know. It's just a fanciful idea."

I set my lips tightly before I answered.

"You and I," I said, "are apt to stick to our ideas, John. Who is she?"

He blew out a cloud of smoke, and waved it away from me with his hand.

"You know," he said a little reproachfully.

"I expect I know," I agreed, "but it would be rather awkward if I named the wrong one. So you had better tell me, John."

He put his hands in his pockets and leaned back in his chair.

"Amanda," he said, "of course."

"Amanda," I echoed. "Yes. You always liked the child—yes. Has she any notion of your—your 'fanciful idea'?"

He smiled and shook his head.

"Goodness knows what notions she has in her pretty head. She *is* pretty, isn't she, mater."

"She is exceedingly pretty," I assented. It was true; but anyhow I should not have applied the stimulus of opposition to John.

"I think her head is mainly filled with finery and mischief at present," he said. "You see, it's like this. I've always been a sort of big brother to her; and I could easily put the notion there; and if I did I'd take care that no one else put it out." He set his firm mouth. "But I don't think it would be fair to catch her like that, before she's had a chance to learn whether she would like some other fellow better. So I'm not going to take a start. I'll run with the rest—if I run. Sometimes I think it's only nonsense; at any rate it's merely an idea."

"Merely an idea," I agreed, and said no more.

I made up my mind that it should stop at an idea. I considered her a pretty, vain child, fond of finery and gaiety; good enough at heart, and affectionate, but frivolous, and quite incapable of loving as John's wife must love John.

I went to town the next day and saw my husband's brother. John must have a good offer to go abroad immediately, I told him.

"If necessary," I said, "I will pay for the offer; up to two thousand pounds."

"Umph!" he said. "I don't think there's any need for *that*. Lots of people would be glad to have him. He's not brilliant, but he knows his business; and people take to him. It's a love-affair, of course."

"Yes," I replied.

"What is she? Actress or barmaid? Or otherwise undesirable?"

"Otherwise undesirable," I said.

I told him no more. He grumbled a little; but he said that I was a reasonable woman and a fine mother, and he'd accept my judgment.

A few days later the offer came to John. The post was at Cape Town, and the salary was high. I urged him to accept it.

"I haven't a deal to leave you," I told him. "It has been the one desire of my life to see you doing well. I have given my life to you, John."

He bent and kissed me.

"You very much wish it, mother?" he asked.

"I very much wish it," I answered.

"Then I will go," he said.

He went a week later. I should have gone with him, but the doctor advised me to wait for the cool season. So I arranged to follow in about three months' time. He said nothing about his "idea." Neither did I. He took Amanda out a good deal those last few days; but he had always done that, and I saw no signs of any change in their brotherly and sisterly relations. She was as light-hearted as usual and teased him about marrying a Kaffir.

I met her the day after he had gone. She mentioned him casually, and suggested that he would come back "a diamond millionaire or something." She laughed at everything as usual.

I met her again a few days later. It was blowing furiously, and she told me that she had had to run after an old gentleman's hat. It seemed to amuse her greatly.

"They say there's a gale everywhere,"

she remarked. "It's lucky that you didn't go with John."

"The worse the storm," I said, "the more I should wish to be with him."

It blew harder than ever that night. I walked my room till daybreak and prayed that the storm might not reach so far as John, and wished that I was with him. I wished it more than ever in the morning when they brought up the newspaper with my tea. I found huge head-lines about the disastrous gale; and under them I found a little cable-message. His ship had been blown out of her course and had run ashore. One boat-load only had been saved; women and children and the crew who rowed them. There was no mention of John.

May the good Lord blot out my wicked thoughts that morning! I think He will. He would understand. The rector did not. I remember his look of horror when I answered his twaddle about the dispensations of Providence. I am not an irreligious woman, but—— A mother would not have talked to me about Providence then.

I locked myself up in my room and took out the things that had been John's; the things that I had hoarded for many years; his baby robe, his first frock, the "bufly boo ribbon" that he was so proud of, a lock of his baby hair—and other locks, changing from golden to brownish black—a torn linen book, a broken horse, his first—— Oh, mothers will know!

I emptied a second drawer to fill it with later mementoes of him. I would have his school prizes, the bat that he made his first century with, his discarded pipes, the broken stud that he left behind, and many other things. They should all go in the drawer; but his old dressing-gown should hang on my door. I would fancy when I was half awake that it was John.

I was going to his room to fetch them, but Cook stopped me on the landing. She had been with us for many years. She was crying. Some people can cry.

"If you please, ma'am," she began, but I held up my hand.

"Some other time, Cook," I said.

"I remember him when he wasn't more than that high"—she held out her hand—"and never thought——"

I tried to pass on, but she caught at my arm.

"I must tell you, ma'am," she protested. "Miss Lester has come."

"Send her away!" I cried fiercely. How dared she come? This frivolous creature whom John had loved and who had not loved John!

"He was always fond of her, ma'am," Cook pleaded; "and—and she begged so hard to go in his study, and—won't you go to her, ma'am? She's right broken-hearted."

"Miss Lester's heart will mend," I said.

I walked resolutely to the study to send her home. How dared she come to mate her grief with mine?

I found her sitting at his table with her arms outstretched and her head upon them. She held a paper in one hand. I recognized John's handwriting. She looked up at me, but did not speak. Her lips looked swollen and her eyes were almost closed with crying. She held up the paper to me. I pushed it aside.

"Did John—speak to you," I asked, "before he went?"

She held out the paper again. I took it and read.

LOVED AMANDA.

Amanda's young and careless,
And laughs the time away.
"Her head is full of nonsense,"
Is what most people say.
They haven't seen Amanda
With love-light in her eyes;
They haven't heard Amanda
Beneath the starry skies.

Amanda's fond of dresses,
And just a trifle vain;
But have you watched Amanda
With any one in pain?
The little soft voice coaxing,
The gentle little hand,
The patient ear to listen,
The heart to understand.

Amanda isn't twenty
And I am thirty odd,
But once she gave me counsel—
"Do right and trust to God."

None thought she knew my trouble,
For through my clouded day
Her smile was just like sunshine—
I'd kissed the tears away.

Amanda's not the right wife,
My people say, for me.
She leans against my shoulder
And laughs and says: "We'll *see!*
You'll love your little wrong wife,
And she'll love you, no doubt.
She's very, very dreadful—
But *you* sha'n't find it out!"

And when I take Amanda,
With all her ways and wiles,
Her fineries and vanities,
Her witcheries and smiles,
To travel life's long journey,
I know that I shall be
Upon the road to Heaven,
The way she walks with me!

I put the paper down slowly. Somehow it seemed like an explanation to me from John.

"Amanda," I said, "answer me as if *he* were here listening to us. Were you this other Amanda to John?"

She gave a little sob, rose, and staggered.

"I was the best that was in me," she said, "to John—*always!*"

"Then," I said, "I have killed my son."

And then I think I fainted.

I came to upon the sofa. I do not know how the child got me there. I am a big woman and she is a small creature. She was bathing my forehead. When I opened my eyes she kissed me.

"You do not understand," I said. "I sent him away. I asked my brother-in-law to get him the offer."

"I understand," she said quietly.

"It was because I feared that he might marry you," I told her.

"Yes," she said, "I know."

I sat up feebly.

"Did John?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"And he died without forgiving me!" I wrung my hands. "Oh, John! I was wrong! Yes, I was wrong! But I meant it for your good. You didn't know!"

I swayed upon the sofa. Amanda sat beside me and put her arm round me.

"Dear," she said, "he knows now. I think he always knew. You would do what you thought best for him. You always have. He couldn't possibly think anything else. I was a very silly little girl, only—only I loved him so much *always*. Now I shall love you. You will love me, too, because—it would please him. Oh! John! John!"

The tears streamed down her face. I took her in my arms and held her closely.

"Loved Amanda!" I said. "Loved Amanda!"

I took her through John's rooms and shared his things with her; the things that he had used. I put her photograph in a double frame with one of John's. I took her up-stairs and showed her his baby relics that I had treasured. I put among them some little presents that she had given him—those I could find. He had taken most of them away.

"When I think of him," I said, "I shall like to think of his Loved Amanda, too."

She flung her arms round my neck, and called me "mother"; and then, at last, my tears came; and afterward we sat with our arms round each other and talked of him.

She told me how John had often spoken of his "handsome mother," and how he had called me "the most wonderful mother that ever was"; and I told her how he had always praised her, and how he remembered the baby sweetheart who climbed upon his knees; and she told me how their understanding had come about two nights before he went; how he had asked her to remember when fellows came courting her that there was an old fellow across the seas who meant to come courting when she was old enough to know her own mind; and she had taken his arm and said:

"I've known my own mind about that since I was three, John."

He wouldn't distress me by telling me on the last night, she explained, but was going to write from Madeira.

"And then," she said, "I was coming to tell you that I really loved John; and

I was going to show you the verses and say that I was different to him than the foolish girl people thought me; and if I was true to him all the time he was away, wouldn't you believe me."

"I do believe you," I said.

And then there was a loud knock at the door. It was a boy with a telegram.

Got ashore on some wreckage. Only a few bruises. Sorry you've been worried.
JOHN.

"Worried!" cried Amanda. "Worried!"

She laughed wildly; and then she fell down in a faint. It was half an hour before Cook and I brought her round; and then she looked such a pitiful, white, trembling child; such a child with her hair falling down.

"I feel as if I shall never smile again," she said.

"You will smile in a few moments," I told her; and I showed her the cable that I was sending to John.

Shall follow in a month and bring our Loved Amanda. MOTHER.

Amanda held out her hands; and I took them and knelt down beside her, and looked at her closely. The pink color came faintly in her face and she smiled.

"Child," I said, "you are very, very beautiful. I am glad to take such a dear little wife to John."

"You shall never be sorry," she promised.

I never have been. I may be a hard woman, but I am a just one; and it is just to own what I know after two years' happy life with them. I am not a bad woman, and John is a good man; but the surest of us three to keep upon the road to Heaven is Amanda, our Loved Amanda with her childish vanities and her childish smiles.

ROSEMARY AND RUE

ALL times of day miss you and call for you—
The morn upon her rose-red hills,
The noon, the dusk with every changing hue,
And all the midnight sobs for you.
Each happy season still remembers you—
The winter sunlight on the snow,
The April robin, and the blue
Of opening blossoms, rain and dew,
November with her gathered balm and rue.
The old rooms, too, still ask for you
With voices mute—the books, the fire,
The curtains drawn against the night, the new,
Strange silence stealing through.

All the old haunts cry out for you.
Ah, Dear, where'er you are—steadfast and true—
There is no time nor place nor space that has forgotten you!

ALICE E. ALLEN.



The season makes a sensational start. "The Devil," in double form, captures the town. Billie Burke delicious in "Love Watches." "The Mollusc" a very light but entertaining comedy. "The Man from Home" American to the core. A mixture of pulverized history and cloying sentiment is "Glorious Betsy." Lillian Russell comes off with flying colors in "Wildfire." Plenty of light music along Broadway. "Fluffy Ruffles" a sad affair. Successful opening of the Hippodrome. The triumph of the phonograph



WHATEVER may be its finish the theatrical season now whirling along at full speed can lay claim to a sensational start. And New York would rather be sensational than right.

Ever since "The Devil" in two forms was pitchforked on the stage one hot night in August, a childish interest, not unmixed with curiosity, has been manifested in Ferenc Molnar's dramatic version of one of the oldest stories in the world. Managers Harrison Grey Fiske and Henry W. Savage no sooner announced their rival productions than a devil of a time occurred. Their street parades of advertising, their little Bible talks and Shakespearian performances in double-column type, and their daily explanations of what they had done and how they had done it, all helped to send the town to "The Devil." A good Christian might have sworn that the devil himself had a hand in it.

The young Hungarian author proved himself as lucky as he is clever, for I very much doubt whether without the row that was kicked up "The Devil" would have held its own against the much more wicked *Salomes*, who were calling the crowd to come and see what nature had done for them.

To tell the truth Mr. Molnar's *Devil* isn't very bad, for after all he only takes away one man's wife and hands her over, most politely and courteously, to another man with the lady's full consent. Baldly stated, this doesn't seem very devilish, and indeed the profound idea lurking behind this devil's playful sport with human fate is supposed to be that the evil intent and weak purpose lie in the human heart and mind. The poor devil thus becomes a mere philosopher's personification of temptation. So far as any real work is concerned you feel that the author might have given his devil something better, or at least more difficult, to do. In fact the wife and her lover would probably have managed to get themselves into trouble without any assistance from him. Somehow one feels that the devil is wasting his time.

This may sound "terribly deep," as Sweet Sixteen is fond of saying, but

happily Mr. Molnar's devil is a merry gentleman who refuses to become a bore, whatever the lovers and the play may be. There is no denying that the vacillations and futilities of these lovers, *Sandor Tartray*, a young artist, and *Jolan Voross*, wife of a rich merchant of Buda Pesth, are tedious to the last degree, and that only Molnar's neat phraseology, his adroit use of double entendre, and his knowing worldliness save the play from the commonplace.

There is always pleasure in watching a skilful diplomat at work, especially when that work is entrusted to so clever an actor as Mr. George Arliss, and when all is said and done Molnar's devil is nothing more than a parlor diplomat whose exquisite manner veils his sinister purpose and whose smile is blandest when his cause is most devious. But his tools, *Sandor* and *Jolan* —I am keeping you in the Belasco Theater—are so stupid that he could scarcely have enjoyed the game. When these two spend the greater part of the first act in discussing their dead love—protesting too much, methinks, that it is dead and that *Sandor* must trot right along and marry the little heiress *Vilma* —they need no devil from Hungary, let alone the original base of supplies, to bring about their fall. The trick is so easy that one can hardly grow wildly excited over it, although Mr. Arliss, at the Belasco Theater, commands one's admiration for his cleverness in turning the trick.

Here, if ever, actor and part are absolutely one. Mr. Arliss' finished art seems to cast his personality into the very mold of Molnar's *Devil*. His placating smile, his delicate intonation, and his cynical humor are always as humanly possible as his almost inhuman grace. It is his triumph that back of all lurks the suggestion of perverted intelligence, of moral iniquity, of ancient evil. His acting makes doubly bright Molnar's flashes of worldly wit and wisdom. His *Devil* must make the judicious smile in sympathy.

Miss Grace Elliston is a wholesome-looking *Jolan* who means well but acts indifferently. In the scene in the artist's studio where the devil pops from behind a high-backed chair and puts her to the blush she is merely a half-undressed woman who feels decidedly uncomfortable. Later when she writes a letter, under the devil's influence, revealing her love for the artist, she seems like a tired and nervous stenographer taking "dictation." As a purely physical specimen for the devil's experiment, however, she is very well, particularly when she is supposed to be wearing nothing under her cloak on the night of her ball. Mr. Hamilton Revelle, as the artist who goes to the devil, acts with more distinction and with sufficient charm to make it clear why *Jolan*, *Vilma*, and poor *Fanny*, who confesses to being more than the artist's model, are all in love with him. As the hopeless model, Mrs. Arliss strikes the one human note in the play when she tells her simple story to *Vilma* and accepts her lot as inevitable.

At the Garden Theater, Mr. Edwin Stevens makes it very clear that his *Devil* is a jolly bad fellow. If the devil himself swaggered about and did his wicked pranks as much as the Garden variety of devil does, even the Metropolitan police would find him out and lock him up. While Mr. Stevens may be justified in subordinating the psychological to the humorous aspects of the character, his impersonation is too obvious, too crude in color, too much a matter of red lining and fiery waistcoat to satisfy the discriminating onlooker.

The same faults run through the whole performance—theatrical tricks instead of dramatic art. There are even trick doors. Miss Dorothy Dorr is decidedly stagey as the wife, while Mr. Paul McAllister hardly gets under the velvet coat, not to mention the skin, of the artist. But then it's so easy to be "bad."

The difficulty of being good has been beautifully overcome by Miss Gladys Unger in her adaptation of "L'Amour Veille."

Its French authors, De Fleis and Caillavet, would probably fail to see their view of life in "Love Watches." However, innocuous though it may be,

"Love Watches" is not insipid, for Miss Billie Burke has enough deviltry in her to make life a merry whirl for every one in her vicinity.

As *Jacqueline*, the cherished darling of her uncle who has known no discipline but love, and later as the adored and adorable girl-wife of the young *Count André de Juvigny*, Miss Burke is an altogether alluring combination of naïveté, charm, and vivacity. *Jacqueline* is led to commit all sorts of follies because of her jealousy of her husband's past, and Miss Burke carries out these follies with all the pouting seriousness of a delightful child.

When two cattish "fiends" tell her of her husband's prenuptial flirtation with *Lucie de Morfontaine*, *Jacqueline's* wrath flares and sputters like a pinwheel, and it changes to righteous indignation when she learns that her hitherto trusted "Snoodles" has not only taken *Lucie* home but is staying there, after promising never to see her again. This is too much for little *Jacqueline*. Her high spirits rise to thoughts of revenge—and here some delicious comedy is bounced over the footlights by Miss Burke. She gave proof of her charm and cleverness with John Drew in "My Wife" last season, and the further and better account that she gives of herself in "Love Watches" fully justifies Charles Frohman's judgment in putting her name in big type and electric letters.

But to get back to the story: *Jacqueline's* childish fury, her agonies at the telephone, her impatient sealing of farewell letters with flying fingers are as infectiously funny as the anticlimax to her great coup against her husband. Her revenge takes the form of seeking a discarded lover, *Ernest Augarde*, bookworm and historian, whose pathetic fate it has been never to win a woman's favor. The scene between selfish little *Jacqueline*, thinking only of revenge, and unselfish, devoted *Ernest* in his shabby apartment is the best of the play.

"Certainly I'll take off my hat," answers *Jacqueline* to *Ernest's* invitation, "I've said farewell to modesty." Could anything be more delicious? Only Miss Burke's way of saying it. She is the sauce of the little goose that the play makes her. But *Ernest's* heroic attempt to kiss the modest little fraud results only in her running up the library ladder after she has soundly boxed his ears.

Mr. Ernest Lawford's forlorn bewilderment over the situation is quite beyond words, and his confession, half to himself, "This isn't exactly my idea of a love-affair," is as funny as it is pathetic. Of course, *Jacqueline* finds she has mistrusted her husband wrongly—thanks to Miss Unger's care in the matter—and poor *Ernest* is left without a sigh; he finds a kind of solace in the faithful adoration of his secretary. Yet no one remembers the little box of billets-doux recording his failures in love rather than his one conquest.

"Love Watches" came to us from Paris via London, but "The Mollusc," another comedy of delicate texture, is as English as its chief delight, Miss Alexandra Carlisle. It suggests hedgerows and afternoon tea, yet its lesson in "molluscing" is not without application here. Hubert Henry Davies has given us an easily recognizable type in the human mollusc who clings with all her might to the old, easy, comfortable way of doing nothing.

Mr. Davies introduces us to *Mrs. Baxter*, young, healthy, pretty, with an indulgent husband and a delightful country home, but so incorrigibly lazy that her spirit has put a blight upon her immediate circle. Her husband and the governess, *Miss Roberts*, do nothing but wait upon her. Into this atmosphere of pretty selfishness and long-suffering self-sacrifice, *Tom Kent*, *Mrs. Baxter's* brother from America, brings a fresh breeze of common sense. He sees through his sister in a flash —for he was once a mollusc himself as well as the son of a famous mollusc—and with his wits quickened by a sudden interest in the much-abused governess, he determines to cure his sister of molluscing.

The rest of the play occupies itself with *Tom's* attempts to effect the cure.

The second act resolves itself into a battle between brother and sister as to who shall arrange the flowers, and whether they shall go on a picnic or not. *Mrs. Baxter* scores a victory in each case, but her peace of mind is disturbed when she sees that *Tom* is falling in love with the governess. Her attempt to teach *Miss Roberts* "her place" rouses that lady's fighting blood. There is a comparatively stormy scene, after which *Miss Roberts*, left alone, gives way to tears. *Baxter*, who has grown very fond of the governess, puts his arm about her and tries to comfort her. He is engaged in this humane task when his wife comes in and gets a second jar.

Thereupon *Mrs. Baxter* takes to her bed. It is a shrewd as well as comfortable move, for by this means she keeps her husband or the governess at her side all the time. Again she triumphs without having her rest disturbed. But at last *Tom* gets his innings. He points out to his sister how dependent her husband is on *Miss Roberts* for companionship. Even now they may be walking in the garden. *Mrs. Baxter* jumps to see for herself, and *Tom* gets his chance to see *Miss Roberts* and propose to her.

"The Mollusc" is so light that a breath of harsh criticism would blow it away, but Miss Alexandra Carlisle gives it a lazy charm, and the rôle of the governess is so beautifully acted by Miss Beatrice Forbes-Robertson that one follows her with unflagging interest. Mr. Joseph Coyne, a young American actor who won a London reputation as the dancing prince in "The Merry Widow," plays *Brother Tom* acceptably. In London this part was played by Sir Charles Wyndham. It does not call for great ability, and for that reason Mr. Coyne cannot be said to be wanting. He does well enough in making *Tom* a likable chap.

"The Mollusc"—which, by the way, is not altogether unlike "Mrs. Gorringe's Necklace" in its chief characters—is preceded by a sentimental trifle called "The Likes O' Me," in which Miss Doris Keane cuts a sorry figure as a poor cockney lad who talks about nothing in particular with the little son of an earl.

"The Man from Home," by Messrs. Booth Tarkington and Henry Leon Wilson, is native American to the core. This gentleman from Kokomo, Indiana, is supposed to represent all the sturdy American virtues as opposed to the decadent tendencies of effete Europe. The authors would probably repudiate this pronounced attitude by pointing to their Russian *Grand Duke*, an excellent gentleman who has manners as well as a brain and a heart.

Daniel Voorhees Pike, attorney-at-law, Kokomo, Indiana, is lacking altogether in the minor graces. He assuredly does not fulfil the ideal of the modern advanced American, but one can easily understand how his rather too pronounced provincialism would be mistaken for patriotism in some regions. There is no denying that his creators are patriotic. Their play is almost a brief against international marriage, and the enthusiasm with which they prove the caddishness of a mercenary Englishman and his even worse father is worthy of a better cause than the snobbish American girl for whose sake *Daniel* comes to Italy all the way from Kokomo.

William Hodge looks a trifle young for the part, but otherwise he is probably just what the authors ordered. He plays the lawyer with a dry humor and what we are asked to believe is the Kokomo manner. Henry Jewett acts the *Grand Duke* splendidly.

An international marriage that turns out happily in spite of history is the theme of "Glorious Betsy," a romantic comedy in which Miss Mary Mannering looks her prettiest. This "sweet" play, by that honeyed dramatist Rida Johnson Young, is a mixture of pulverized history and cloying sentiment. It deals with the romance of *Elizabeth Patterson*, of Baltimore, and *Jerome Bonaparte*, who comes to her in the guise of a French teacher, and notwithstanding "little obstacles" like Napoleon and history, *Jerome* returns from France in the last act to be *Betsy's*

king instead of King of Westphalia. Miss Mannering looks so lovely in the quaint frocks and picturesque coiffure of the period and acts the wilful coquette so charmingly that one is willing to overlook her shortcomings in the emotional moments of the play.

Every one who admires Lillian Russell—and who doesn't?—will be glad to know that she has come off with flying colors in her new racing play, "Wildfire." In this comedy, an elaboration of George V. Hobart's vaudeville sketch by Mr. Hobart and George Broadhurst, the ever-fair Lillian finds herself a widow with a racing-stable on her hands. Perhaps Miss Russell's most difficult moment in the play is when she has to say that she doesn't know the difference between a starting-post and the judges' stand. As all New York knows, Miss Russell knows racing by heart, and it is this fact, no doubt, that puts her right in her element in "Wildfire." She breezes through the little play like the favorite she is and always has been since her Tony Pastor days. In honor of the glad event she has taken off at least half a dozen years and put on three gowns that would make the most fashionable grand stand in the world lose its roof. But she is very careful not to carry a handkerchief in the second act, which is down at the track. And here she learns that an unprincipled bookmaker who has worshiped her in vain holds the big race in his handkerchief, as it were. He has instructed the jockey on Wildfire, her horse, to ride according to his signal from the training quarters. If a handkerchief is waved, the boy is to win the race; if not, he is to let another horse win. A stable-boy overhears the plot and "tips it off" to the widow.

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What shall she do? She'll make love to the bookmaker and let him make love to her—that's what! She goes over to the window where he is standing and smiles upon him. (On, Wildfire, on!) Oh, yes, she thinks him very nice. He is distracted for the moment. (Beating hoofs heard in the distance!) Yes, she admires him very much. (Clickety-click!) The book-maker loses his head. He slips his arm about her waist. She puts her arm over his shoulder, draws out his handkerchief and waves it frantically. (Clickety-click-click-*click!*) Wild-fire wins! Hooray—all but the book-maker.

That's the way it goes, and after that nothing matters. The play is all in one act, but Miss Russell is in three acts, shedding her beauty right and left. She cheerfully yields the best lines to her diminutive leading man, Will Archie, who makes the stable-boy a real joy. Frank Sheridan, as a horse-trainer, comes in for third money. "Wildfire" is good sport.

Although Miss Russell doesn't sing in her play, there is plenty of light music along Broadway. "The Girls of Gottenberg," from London, will give you enough pretty music to repay a visit to the Knickerbocker Theater. Gertie Millar, for years the darling of the London Gaiety, is the nicest girl in "Gottenberg." She sings prettily and dances even better. James Blakeley, an English comedian who has been here before, keeps the fun going, and when he and Miss Millar settle down to "Sausages" you get a real song treat. Miss May Naudain leads the American contingent with her sweet voice, and Miss Louise Dresser puts all the British blondes in the shade. The girls are tuneful, and Mr. Blakeley is jolly.

Another English comedian, George Grossmith, Jr., finds himself much worse off at the Criterion Theater, where "Fluffy Ruffles" is about the saddest affair ever set to music. Miss Hattie Williams wanders aimlessly through the piece, trying to find something to do. She is everything from a shop-girl in America to a suffragette in England, but she is never anything worth while.

"Algeria," at the Broadway Theater, has the merit of Victor Herbert's music. Aside from that and the very handsome mounting the piece is disappointing. Glen MacDonough's book is almost as bad as the one John J. McNally furnished "Fluffy Ruffles." The

most striking feature of the production is a wind-storm. Miss Ida Brooks Hunt managed to weather the storm on the opening night, but her voice was bad and after a few nights she gave up the prima-donna part. Miss Harriet Burt is more pleasing to the eye than to the ear. Stage-manager George Marion does service as a comedian, and William Pruette works hard as the governor-general of the cast.

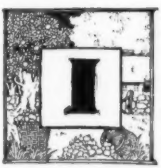
More charming than anything to be found in the musical shows is the bird ballet at the Hippodrome. Even the "Dance of the Hours" is almost forgotten in the novel beauty of the new ballet. Another eye-opening spectacle is "The Battle in the Skies," with bombarding air-ships destroying a city and spreading radium, if not radiance, over the scene. These are the two big features that are attempting to restore the glories of Frederic Thompson's time to the Hippodrome. The man in this case is R. H. Burnside, who has hitherto given his attention to the musical-comedy productions of the Shuberts. Further evidence of his skill is shown in "Sporting Days," the best feature of which is a baseball-game.

One of the most peculiar summer-time amusement features New York has had is no more like Broadway than Coney Island is like Oshkosh. Nevertheless it is amusing, and besides, is so out-of-the-ordinary as to merit passing mention in an article devoted to theatricals. A phonograph or, if you please, a graphophone, has been the butt of the jokesmiths for several years now. And, it must be admitted, there are reasons for some of the wit and humor which are usually called forth whenever the singing machine with the bell-like mouth is brought forth and wound up. Now the much-lampooned instrument is having its innings.

Thousands of visitors to the Waldorf-Astoria Roof Garden and to Martin's, two of Gotham's smartest dining places, have been delighted this summer by curious orchestras made up of the usual number of wind and string instruments and a big "talking machine." The arias from "Traviata" have been played by the same men who help to draw crowds to the two great opera-houses during the winter, and from the poor jocose machine has come the silvery voices of Tetrazzini, Sembrich, and Melba. Caruso, Bonci, and the great Renaud have sung to magnificent orchestral accompaniment while hungry folk were eating, and the fame of the phonograph's rise in art has gone so far abroad in the land that the Waldorf and the famous French restaurant have been literally packed with the best sort of music-lovers. It may sound queer, but it's a fact that during the summer of 1908 the phonograph has been one of the chief opponents of "The Merry Widow," "The Follies of 1908," and a hundred "Salomes." And being such it deserves a word of startled praise from every jaded First Nighter.



Something about the Christmas Ainslee's. Robert W. Chambers in "The Firing Line" adds nothing to his reputation. "The Car and the Lady," by Percy F. Megargel and Grace Sartwell Mason, a story of action and little else beside. Not much enthusiasm can be aroused by Stewart Edward White's "The Riverman." "The Last Voyage of the 'Donna Isabel,'" by Randall Parrish, full of almost every conceivable adventure. A curious and almost impossible tale is Ernest Oldmeadow's "Aunt Maud." Tedious reading is Maude Radford Warren's "The Land of the Living"



IN this number of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE there will be found, among other things, some features for which readers of magazine fiction are always keen. It is believed, for instance, that such readers never miss an opportunity to get hold of a new story by Joseph C. Lincoln, and here they will find one of his very best. The title itself, "Cupid and Clam Fritters," will be enough almost to stamp it as one of Mr. Lincoln's without his name attached to it.

Then there is another of Quentin M. Drake's army stories, "The Devil and the Shark," which is every bit as good as its predecessors, "Inspected and Condemned" and "Article 61." This series is not by any means completed, and we think the stories improve as the series progresses.

Attention should also be directed to two other series of short stories, one dealing with college athletics, by Daniel Steele, represented in this number by "The End of the Game," and the other by George Lee Burton, who begins with "The Training of the Groom."

Another of Steel Williams' Western stories is also in this number under the attractive title of "Lignite's Lucky Draw," one of the best he has ever done.

Nobody who buys the magazine will be likely to overlook William J. Locke's story, "The Heart at Twenty," because every one is interested in the author of "The Beloved Vagabond."

The articles on bridge whist, entitled "Around the Bridge-Table," were begun in the August number. They have made a decided hit, and are to be continued indefinitely.

The December or Christmas number of AINSLEE'S will contain a list of stories of the sort that people talk to each other about. That kind of thing happens to AINSLEE'S stories frequently, but it does not always happen to every one in the same number. It will be the good fortune of the Christmas number, however, for the reason that there is not a commonplace or conventional tale in the lot. None of them is cast in the familiar, almost worn-out mold of the magazine short story; each has a character, an individuality, a freshness, and a unique interest that set it apart from anything else of its kind. Joseph C. Lincoln has one of them called "The Back Bedroom," which is characteristic of him, yet with a difference. It is a Christmas ghost story with a

snap at the end, however, which gives it unusual piquancy.

Three of the most striking of the short stories will be by Clara E. Laughlin, Will Levington Comfort and Francis Willing Wharton. They are very remarkable tales and go to prove that the art of short-story writing has not been exhausted.

The complete novel will be by Beatrix Demarest Lloyd. It is a story of as great dramatic intensity as Miss Macvane's "The Thoroughbred," which is concluded in this number, though with possibly less action.

The series referred to above will be continued, including the articles on bridge whist.

* * *

Robert W. Chambers' latest novel is "The Firing Line," published by D. Appleton & Co.

It is a book which will do more for the author's bank-account than for his reputation as a novelist. Mr. Chambers has hitherto shown no little skill in duplicating his stories. He wrote a series of three books—there was to be a fourth, but it has not yet appeared—of the colonial period; the first was entitled "Cardigan," and the two which followed were Cardigans under other names. Then he wrote "The Fighting Chance," following on the heels of Mrs. Wharton's book, "The House of Mirth," and improving upon it, unquestionably. Its success produced "The Younger Set," and now "The Firing Line," each showing unmistakable signs of deterioration. Mr. Chambers should drop the society theme. He has done all he can with it.

His hero and heroine are two impossible people; they have appeared in his books before, the young prig of high ideals and the innocent young woman of extraordinary erudition. Garry Hamil and Shiela Cardross are too sublimated for any human use, and when they fell in love with each other, to the great advantage of the rest of the world, they should have been immediately translated. It would have saved the rest of us the knowledge of the grotesquely artificial complication which prevented the immediate consummation of their loves.

If the book can be saved Louis Malcourt performs that almost superhuman feat. He is a somewhat original and wholly interesting character. Although his rôle is that of the villain he is really the only person in the tale who is capable of stirring anything like human sympathy, and one cannot but feel genuine regret at his departure.

* * *

"The Car and the Lady," by Percy F. Megargel and Grace Sartwell Mason, published by the Baker & Taylor Company, is a story of action—that is to say there is "something doing" all the time, and there is very little beside.

It is hardly necessary for any one to read more than two chapters, for, having done that he can tell himself the rest of the story without difficulty and possibly with more real entertainment than he would derive from the printed pages. If he knows that Jerry Fleming, embodying six feet of clean young American manhood—the authors do not so describe him, but they no doubt meant to—challenges Count Vannuccini to a motor race from New York to Portland, Oregon, the prize to be the hand of Miss Betty Albright, he will anticipate all the consequences of the wager and will know who wins even before the start is made. If he does not he will not be the kind of person to take the least interest in any kind of story.

It is said to be "a romance seen through the log-book of an actual journey." The authors hope that "more motorists may feel the lure of the American road"—a hope, by the way, that is less and less shared by the non-motoring public, and they add that "if this class of traveler finds in 'The Car and the Lady' a timely word which will make the way easier they will feel that they have been justified in supplementing the purely romantic interest

of their story with wisdom gained in the school of experience."

The automobile, among its other achievements, has evolved the guide-book romance.

* * *

"The Riverman" is Stewart Edward White's new book, and is published by the McClure Company.

It is supposed to be one of Mr. White's outdoor stories, but it is not one over which much enthusiasm can be stirred up. We will have to take it for granted that he knows a good deal about the business of logging in northern Michigan—our realistic novelists do not venture to write nowadays until they have spent some time in the environment they are to describe, whether it is a slaughter-house or a logging-camp or a ballroom. He is quite facile in his handling of peavies and jams and sluices and such, sufficiently, at any rate, to convince the uninitiated; the cultivated classes who read his books are in no position, we may be sure, to indulge in criticism of it of a technical character. But the financial side of it even Mr. White himself does not seem so sure of, for in one chapter he adds in a foot-note an elaborate explanation of how the villain squeezed the hero, who was the former's partner in the logging business.

The love-story is a poor fit, as the dressmakers say, or rather as their customers say. It may very well be that brawny Western loggers often fall in love, and it may also be that New York society girls occasionally fall in love, but the two types seldom fall in love with each other—probably, Mr. White would say, only because of a lack of opportunity. Therefore the love of John and Carroll will appear to most readers something of an anomaly, not to say an abnormality.

* * *

A. C. McClurg & Co., who publish Randall Parrish's "The Last Voyage of the Donna Isabel," say that it is fit to take its place on the shelves beside Clark Russell and Robert Louis Stevenson. We wonder if this comparison is made because the book is "reminiscent"—to use a current euphemism—of "The Wreck of the Grosvenor" and "Treasure Island."

Mr. Parrish has made use of most of the material that Clark Russell handled so effectively, a combination of nearly every conceivable adventure, possible and impossible, that can befall one at sea, storm, calm, mutiny, wreck, and rescue, the fair young woman and the bold sailor, or rather the gentleman sailor—he must be gentle enough to mate the heroine.

John Stephens tells the story and describes himself as a native of Massachusetts of excellent family connections. He is induced, under false representations, to take command of a steam-yacht lying in the harbor of Valparaiso, and only after the boat is at sea discovers that it is the property of an Englishman, Lord Darlington, that it is bound for the Antarctic to recover from a Spanish wreck the sum of 3,000,000 pesos. He also finds to his own surprise as well as that of the other adventurers that Lady Darlington is aboard with her maid. It is not difficult, of course, to forecast from this the nature of the story. One problem after another is presented to the young man for solution, and there is no alternative for him but success. The yacht is lost, to be sure, and the majority of her crew, but he finds the wreck, the *Donna Isabel*, and returns safely, bringing back Lady Darlington, and hears that her husband is dead.

* * *

"Aunt Maud," by Ernest Oldmeadow, published by the McClure Company, is a curious kind of love-story.

Aunt Maud is described as only thirty-three and "the loveliest, sweetest, most adorable creature in all the world." She may have been all that and more, but it does not prevent her from being a sad bungler in the art of match-making, as her niece, Irene Baxenden, discovered to her sorrow.

The tale is told through the medium of three hundred and seventy-three pages of Irene's diary, and necessarily we are obliged to read much that has very little to do with the story. The bulk of the diary is a faithful report of conversations between Aunt Maud and Irene on the subject of love in its various manifestations and the wisdom of marriage, with or without love.

Irene, who is visiting her aunt, discovers very early that she has been invited solely for the purpose of meeting Richard Camber, a young man who has distinguished himself as a colonial judge in some region not definitely located, but at any rate a place where there are Indians. Although she is properly indignant that Aunt Maud should deliberately involve her in such a scheme, she not only remains but promptly, upon Camber's arrival, tells him all about it, and they come to a temporary understanding in order to avoid annoyance from other members of the house-party. Naturally they soon actually fall in love, but the circumstances are such that Irene cannot bring herself to believe in it until Camber, at the very end, tells her, in conformity with a promise he has made, a preposterously silly story of a scar which he carries. The book is almost impossible even for summer reading.

* * *

"The Land of the Living" is, we believe, Maude Radford Warren's first book. It is published by Harper & Bros.

The hero is Hugh MacDermott, and is first introduced to us as a Chicago street boy, Irish of course. He attracts the attention of one of Chicago's bosses, John Callahan, principally because of his courage and his innocence, and the boss takes him out of the streets into his own home. The result is a good education for Hugh and his start as a lawyer.

The pair make a pilgrimage to Callahan's old home in Ireland, in the course of which the heroine makes her appearance in the person of Moira Carew, the daughter of a broken-down Irish gentleman, and Hugh falls in love with her. Later she turns up in Chicago, having come to America under the pressure of the necessity of making her living. There she meets Henry Furlong, Hugh's partner and a rising politician, and they become engaged.

A swindle which Furlong has engineered comes to light, however, although Hugh, out of his love for Moira, has represented himself as the guilty one in order to shield his partner, and Moira, finding that all the time she has loved Hugh, repudiates Furlong, and the story ends as it should.

It is rather labored both in plot and style, and therefore makes tedious reading. A good deal more might have been made out of the character of Callahan in spite of the fact that his type has been previously overworked, and the same may be said of most of the other characters. Hugh himself is too goody-goody and makes but a slight impression.

* * *

Important New Books.

"A Spirit in Prison," Robert Hichens, Harper & Bros.

"The Diva's Ruby," F. Marion Crawford, Macmillan Co.

"The Money Changers," Upton Sinclair, B. W. Dodge & Co.

"Angel Esquire," Edgar Wallace, Henry Holt & Co.

"The Spitfire," Edward Peple, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"Holy Orders," Marie Corelli, F. A. Stokes Co.

"The Testing of Diana Mallory," Mrs. Humphry Ward, Harper & Bros.

"Flower of the Dusk," Myrtle Reed, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"Peter," F. Hopkinson Smith, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Big Fellow," Frederick Palmer, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The Coming Harvest," René Bazin, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Well in the Desert," Adeline Knapp, Century Co.

"Tables of Stone," Harold Bigbie, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The Leaven of Love," Clara Louise Burnham, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Man from Brodney's," George Barr McCutcheon, Dodd, Mead & Co.



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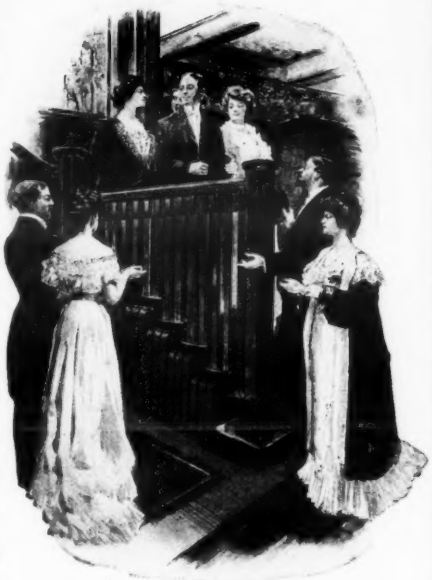
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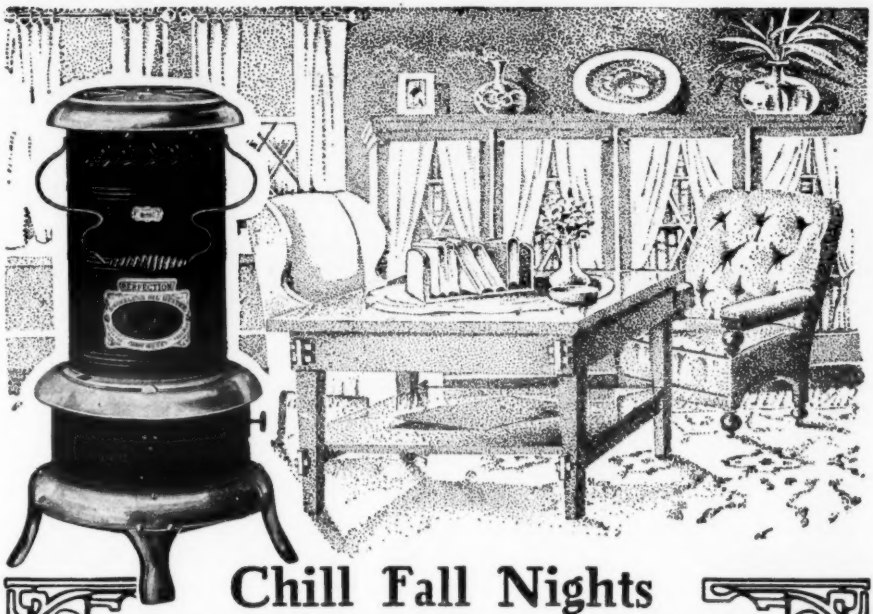
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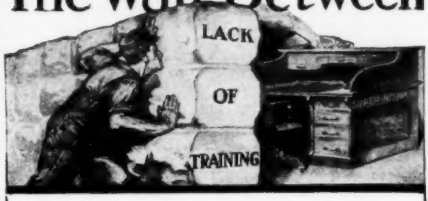
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White Rock

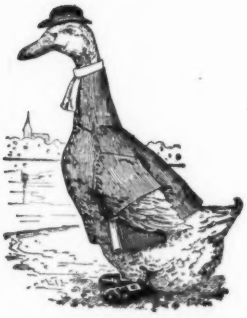
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One nozzle for carpet or rug cleaning.

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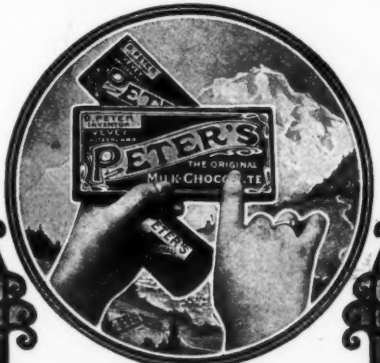
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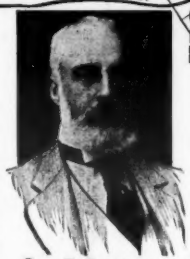
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I Must Absolutely Prove That

10 Acres of this Irrigated Land

Can be Made to Earn Over $100.00 A Month For You



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I Will Sell it to You for $3.00 a Week

Any one who is familiar with the results from Texas Irrigated Land will tell you that the safest, surest way to gain a large and permanent income from a small outlay is to get hold of a few acres of Texas Irrigated Land.

But, heretofore, it has required some capital—at least a few hundred dollars—and it has been necessary for the purchaser to go and live on the land and develop it.

Now, my company makes it possible for you to get ten acres of the finest kind of Texas Irrigated Land, all under cultivation, income property from the very beginning, if you can save $3.00 a week.

You can go and live on it—absolutely assured of an independent living from it alone.

Or arrangements will be made to have it cultivated for you for a small share of the crops.

Now I can and will prove all this from the highest authorities in the land.

All you have to do is—write to me and say, "Prove to me that ten acres of your Texas Irrigated Land can be made to produce an income of from $1,000.00 to $5,000.00 a year."

I have the proof, so read what my company will do for you.

New Safe Land Plan

I will deliver at once to the Citizen's State Bank of Barstow, Texas, a Warranty Deed to ten acres of the land of the Pecos Valley Land and Irrigation Company as per the subdivision of the Company's property made by John Wilson and filed for record with the County Clerk of Ward County, Texas.

I will deliver at once to you, one of our Secured Land Contracts for the Warranty Deed at the Bank—on the contract appears a certificate signed by an Officer of the Bank and certifying that the Bank has your deed and will deliver it to you according to the terms of your Secured Land Contract. The Bank acts as an independent agent for both of us—to guarantee fair play.

You must pay $3.00 a week, or at the rate of $3.00 a week in monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual payments.

Or you can pay as much faster as you like.

At the end of each year—if you take more than a year to complete your payments—you will be credited with 5 per cent per annum on the amount you have paid.

$15 down and $3 a week paid regularly, and the interest credits, will mature your Contract in a little over two and three-fourths years.

But you can mature your Contract by paying the same total amount, $483, in a day, a month, six months, a year, or in any less time than 2¾ years, and whenever your regular receipts and your interest allowance credit receipts total $483, all you have to do to get your land is to take or send your receipts and your contract to the Citizen's State Bank at Barstow, Texas, together with twenty-eight vendor lien notes each for $39, payable one every three months for seven years.

The Bank will then give you your Warranty Deed to the land, which, according to the Contract and the Deed, must be fully irrigated and all under cultivation.

Remember this is ten acres of land which I must first prove is capable of producing an income of from $1,000 to $5,000 a year.

You get this land for $483, which you can pay in less than three years—$15 down and $3 a week—and you then have only four $39 notes each year for seven years to pay out of your income.

Can you hope in any other way, so safe and sure as this, to have so large an independent income in so short a time?

I believe the purchase of Texas Irrigated Land to be the best way for a man of small means to make himself independent. And I believe I am qualified to pass judgment as I have been interested in irrigation matters locally and nationally for 15 years.

The results are simply astounding to those who are unfamiliar with the great subject of irrigation.

And I believe the happiest man these days is the man with the little ten acre irrigated farm.—(President Roosevelt says, "Even 5 acres is enough to support a family and keep it busy").

The owner of a Ten Acre Irrigated Farm does-n't have to "knuckle to the boss," nor strain his conscience in the struggle of the intense commercialism of the day.

His income is practically untouched by "financial depression."

His living and peace of mind are not dependent upon the whim of any man.

He is king in his own little domain.

He can make his little ten acres earn as much as a quarter section (160 acres) unirrigated, would produce—as much as between twenty and eighty thousand dollars in cash would bring, loaned out at 6 per cent.

He has his clever neighbors, his telephone, good roads, schools and churches—in fact, all the comforts and conveniences of life that come with the prosperous close-knit community, though they pass by the great isolated farm.

The land I want you to buy is all good rich soil, irrigated from Canals and Ditches already constructed in the most approved modern fashion and carrying an abundant supply of water taken from the ever-flowing Pecos River.

It is within a few miles of Barstow, Texas, and Pecos City, Texas, (the two towns are only 6½ miles apart—the land lies between the towns and a little to the north) and served by the Texas & Pacific Railway and the Pecos Valley Line of the Santa Fe System.

With rich soil, a splendid climate and the uncertain quantity—moisture—eliminated, agriculture and horticulture can here be scientifically carried on to the splendid profit of the land owner.

The abundant crops of large and in every other way superior hays, grains, cotton, vegetables and fruits are equaled in only a very few favored spots.

The justly celebrated Barstow Grapes are considered by many to be even better—variety for variety—than those raised in Southern California—and we are 1,200 miles nearer the great Eastern market.

But all this is the merest outline of what I desire to show you in detail. I am only attempting to make it clear to you that you can have an assured independent living income in less than three years if you can possibly save $3 a week.

I have promised to submit the proof. All you have to do is write for it. Will you do that today, even if you can't commence right away? I want the address of every man or woman who is willing to save $3 a week if I can prove that the result will be financial independence in less than three short years.

There is nothing philanthropic about this proposition, but I especially want to hear from the wage-earners. I have worked for fifteen years to develop this Irrigation System and this community. It would be gratifying to me to have those who most need it reap the benefits of my labors.

It will be more convenient for you to address me at St. Louis, and I am equipped there to best answer you.

GEORGE E. BARSTOW, President
Pecos Valley Land and Irrigation Company, of Barstow, Texas,
837 Missouri Trust Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Safeguarded

The Bank will deliver your deed direct to you when your $3.00 a week and interest credits total $483.00

It Doesn't Take Long

TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILWAY

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During the past 12 years of Republican government the average cost of living has increased 48%

HAS YOUR INCOME INCREASED 48%?

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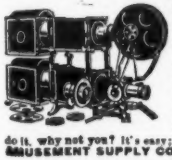
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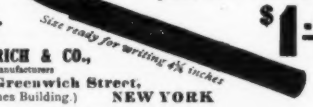
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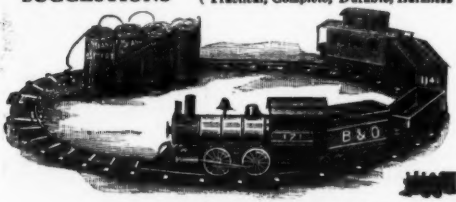
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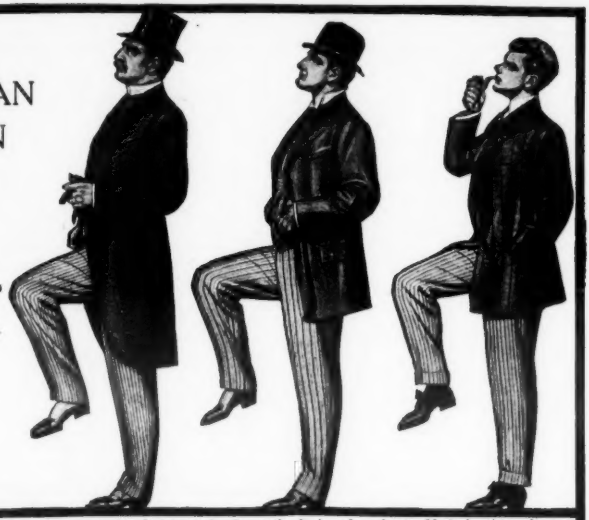
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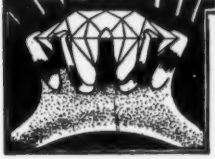
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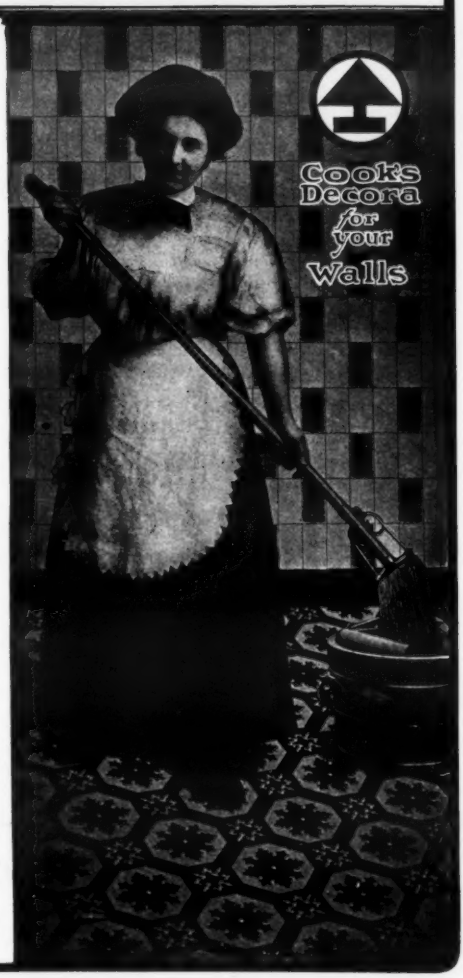
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If *you* are one of the many thousands who do not understand the scores of every day uses the different kinds of Vaseline are for, drop us a line and we will send our

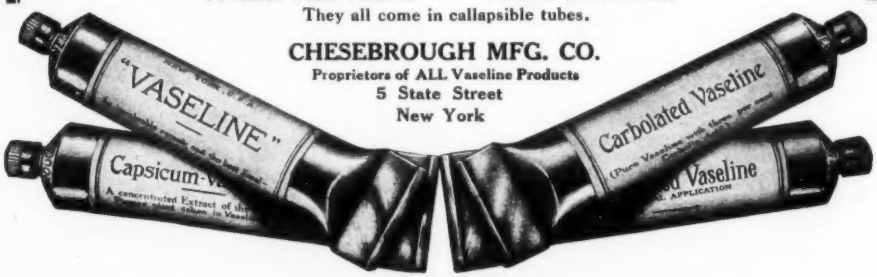
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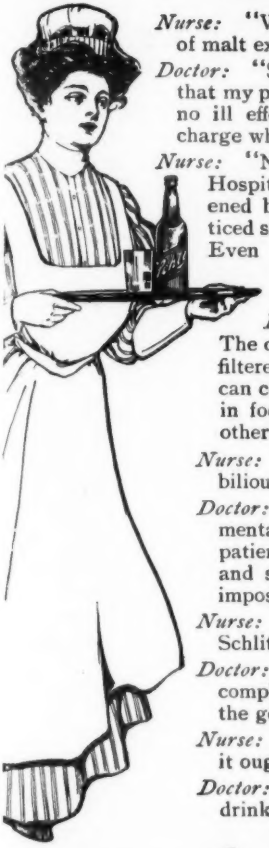
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Doctor: "Schlitz Beer, Nurse. Because I have found that my patients assimilate it better and that there are no ill effects. Have you found anyone under your charge who did not benefit from it?"

Nurse: "No, Doctor. While some patients at the Hospital where I was before were sickened by malt extract, I have never noticed such result from Schlitz Beer here. Even those just recovering from an operation retain Schlitz Beer. Often it is the only food they can take."

Doctor: "It is the best nourishment. The care given its brewing, even to cooling it in filtered air, makes Schlitz Beer so pure that no harm can come from it. Schlitz Beer, too, has a richness in food value, greater than I have found in any other beer, due to the barley, hops and yeast used."

Nurse: "Why is it, Doctor, Schlitz never causes biliousness?"

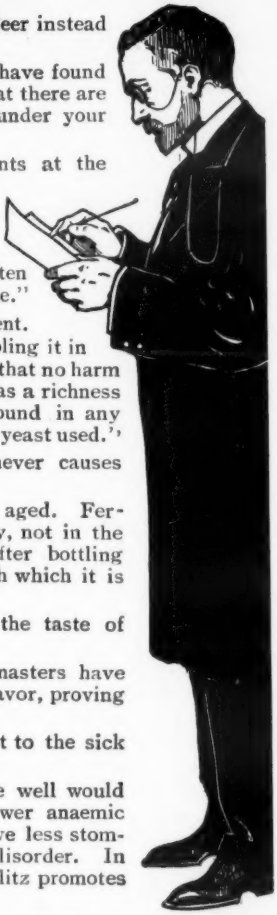
Doctor: "Because Schlitz is thoroughly aged. Fermentation is completed at the brewery, not in the patient's stomach. The final step after bottling and sealing is the sterilization through which it is impossible for any germ to exist."

Nurse: "My patients seem to enjoy the taste of Schlitz."

Doctor: "Yes. Even old world brewmasters have complimented Schlitz on its full rich flavor, proving the goodness of all the materials."

Nurse: "If Schlitz beer is such a benefit to the sick it ought to be good for the well."

Doctor: "It is. And if those who are well would drink more of it we would have fewer anaemic patients. We would have less stomach trouble and nerve disorder. In every way the use of Schlitz promotes health."



Ask for the Brewery Bottling.
See that the cork or crown is branded Schlitz.

Schlitz

The Beer That Made Milwaukee Famous

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One System

Universal Service

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Now, while people are learning that the Bell service has a broad national scope and the flexibility to meet the ever varying needs of telephone users, they know little of how these results have been brought about. The keynote is found in the motto—"One policy, one system, universal service."

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* * * *

A unified policy is obtained because the American Telephone and Telegraph Company has for one of its functions that of a holding company, which federates the associated companies and makes available for all what is accomplished by each.

As an important stockholder in the associated Bell companies, it assists them in financing their extensions, and it helps insure a sound and uniform financial policy.

* * * *

A unified system is obtained because the American Telephone and Telegraph Company has for one of its functions the ownership and maintenance of the telephones used by the 4,000,000 subscribers of the associated companies.

In the development of the art, it originates, tests, improves and protects new appliances and secures economies in the purchase of supplies.

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* * * *

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It establishes a single, instead of a divided, responsibility in inter-state connections, and a uniform system of operating and accounting; and secures a degree of efficiency in both local and long distance service that no association of independent neighboring companies could obtain.

* * * *

Hence it can be seen that the American Telephone and Telegraph Company is the active agency for securing *one policy, one system,* and *universal service*—the three factors which have made the telephone service of the United States superior to that of any other country.

American Telephone & Telegraph Company

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Swift's Premium Calendar for 1909

Consists of four subjects taken by special permission from famous American Art Galleries, as follows:



1. "Going to Pasture"—*Truesdell.* In Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington.
2. "All's Well"—*Winslow Homer.* In Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
3. "Song of the Lark"—*Jules Breton.* In Art Institute of Chicago.
4. "The Sisters"—*Bouguereau.* In Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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How Swift's Premium Calendar can be obtained.

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Or—Ten Wool Soap wrappers.

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